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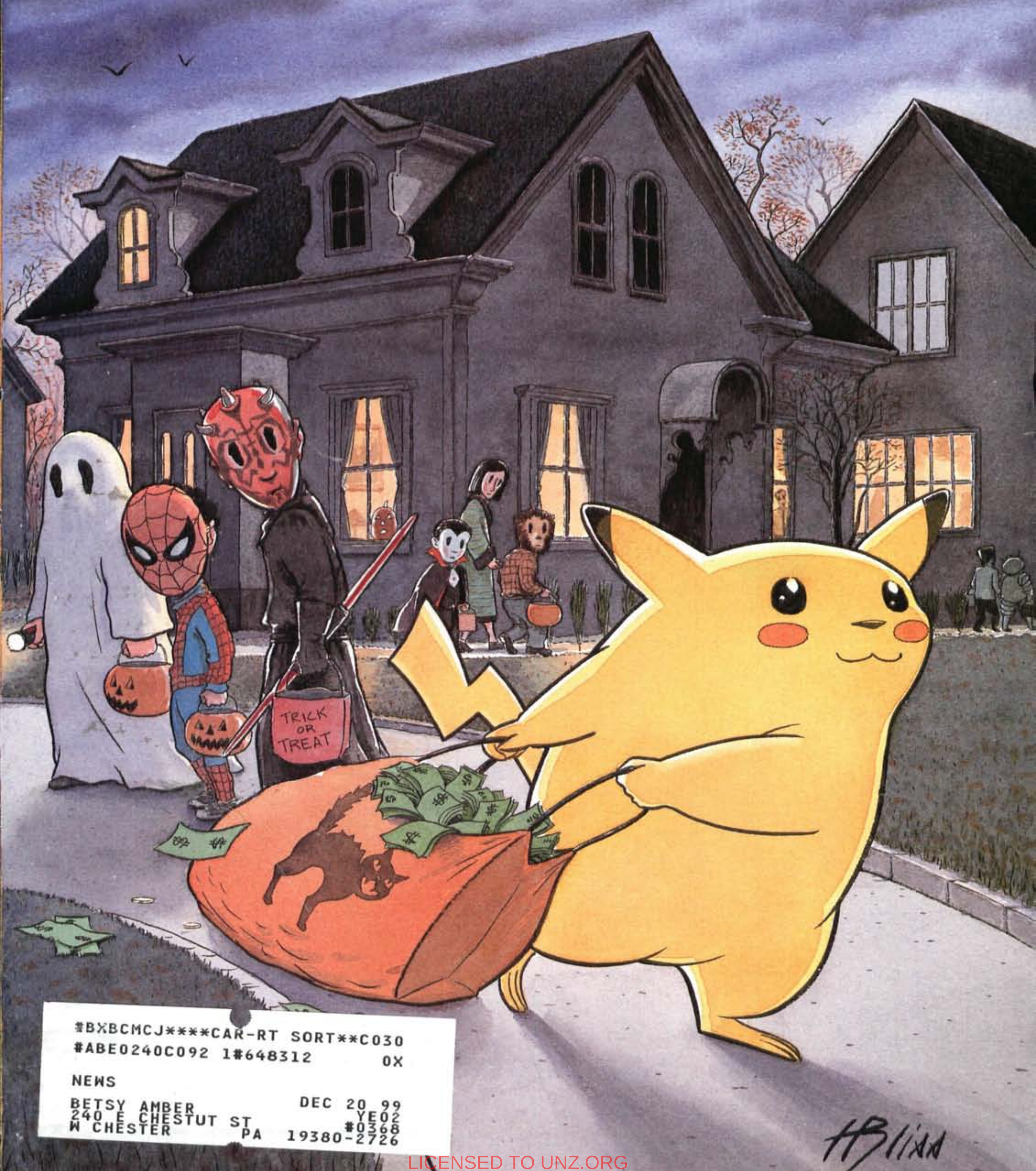
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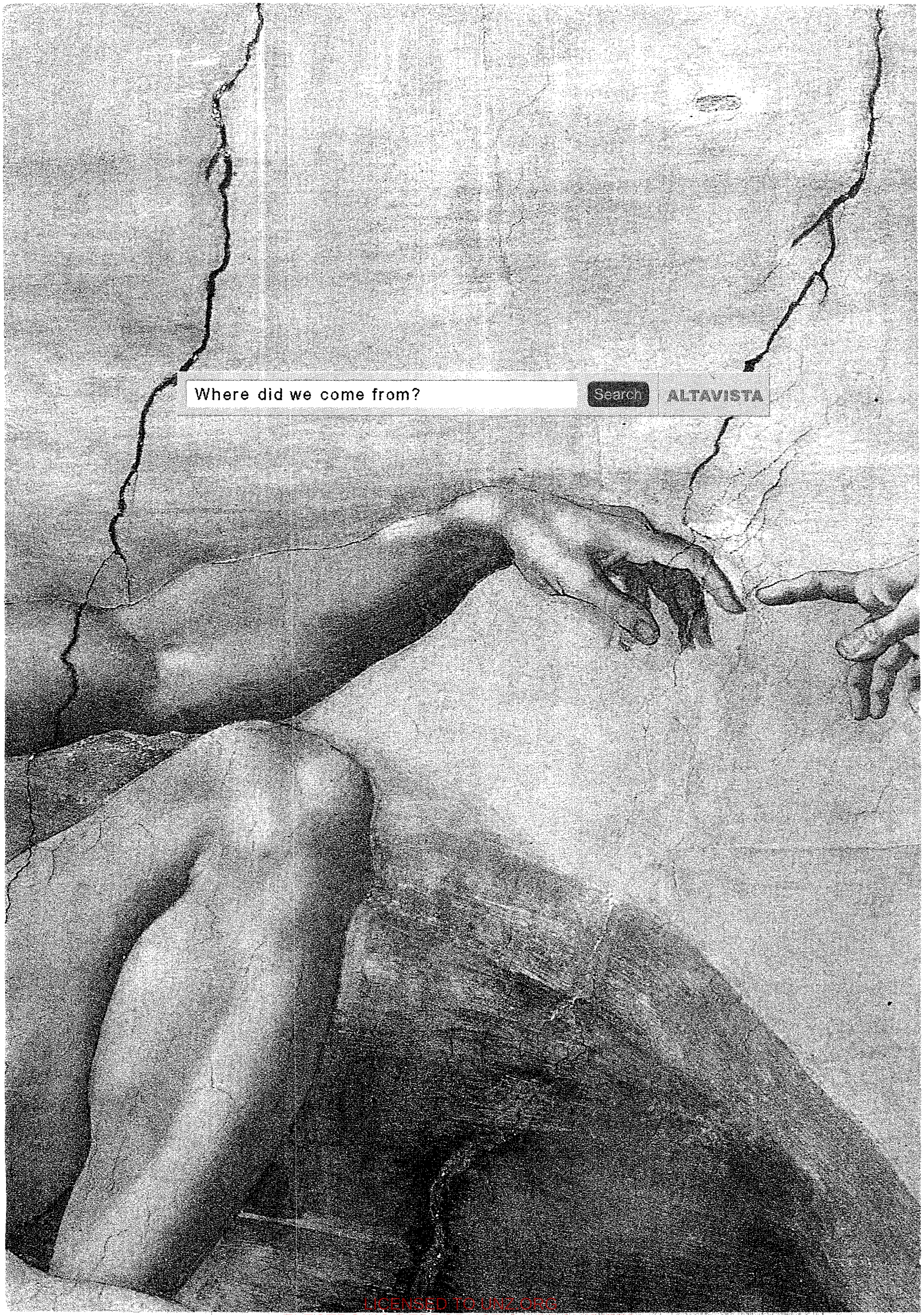
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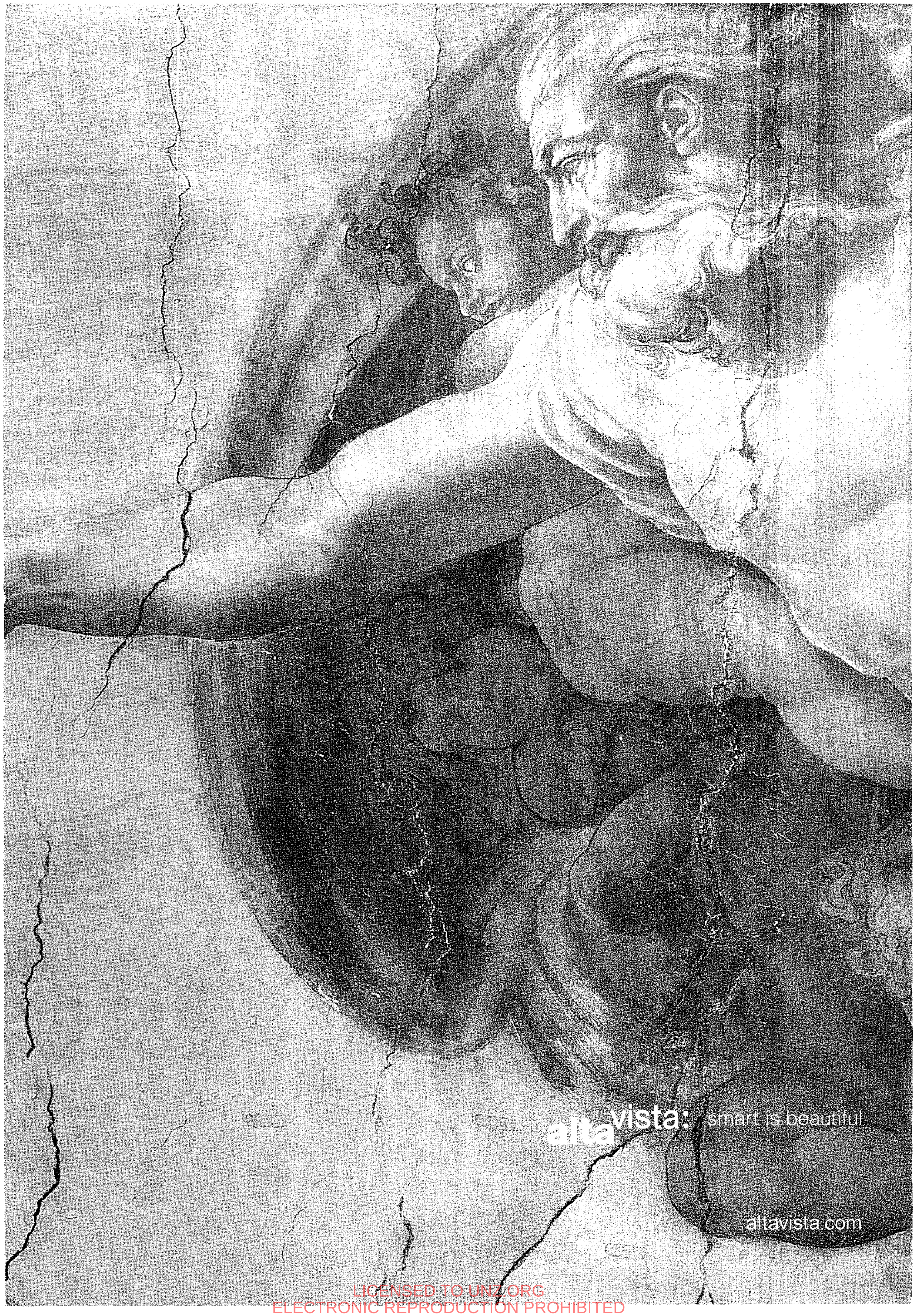
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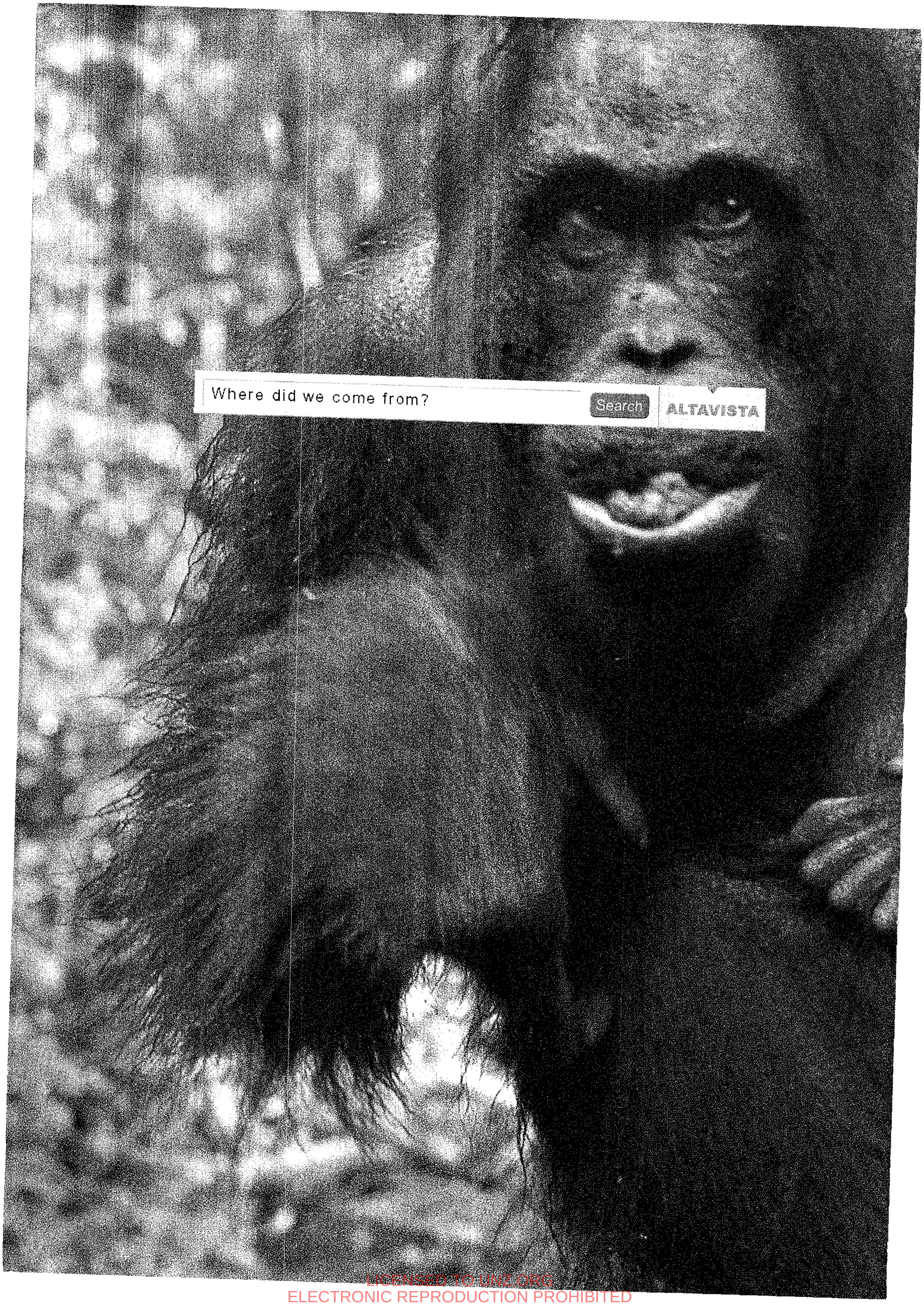
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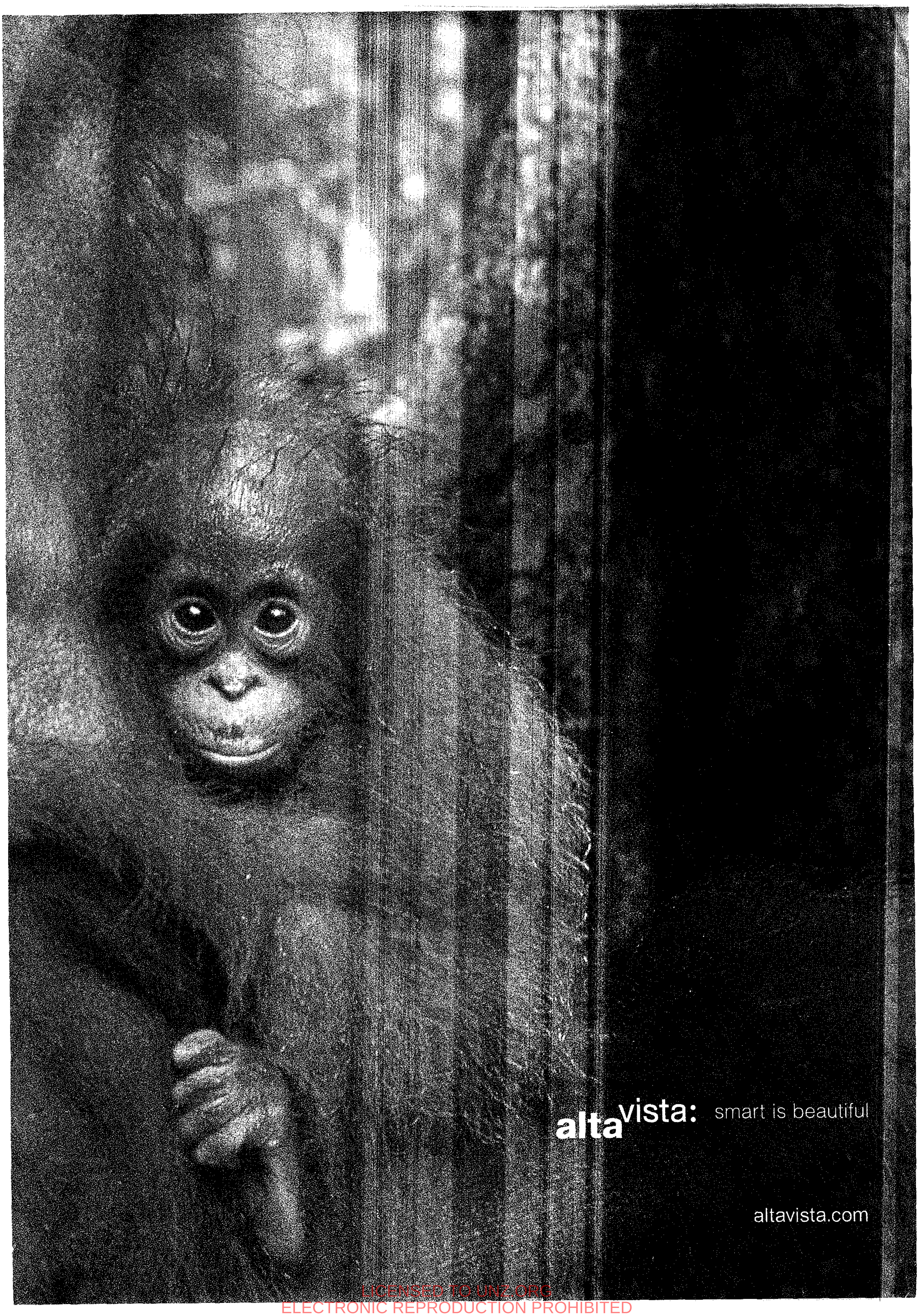
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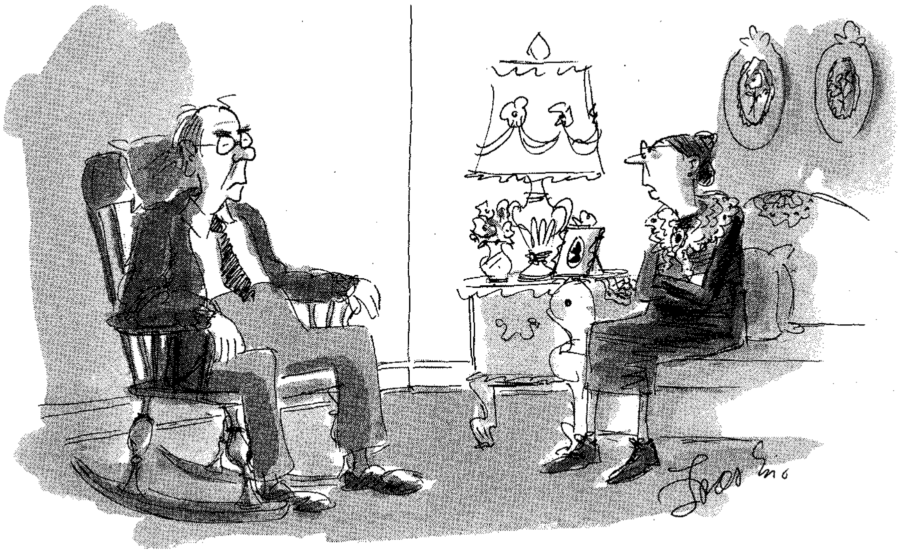

"What shall we do with that hour we gain this weekend?"

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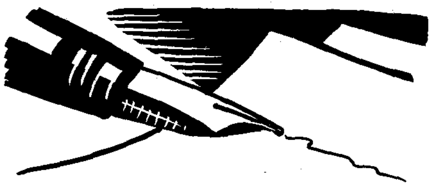

MEDICAL ADVICE

A California law required me to have my ten- and thirteen-year-old sons immunized against hepatitis B in order to attend school (Comment, by Michael Specter, October 11th). I didn't feel they were at risk, but I reviewed the benefits and risk information with our doctor and read the pamphlets from county and state health departments. The literature stated that "no serious reactions have been linked to this vaccine." So I made what I thought was an informed decision, and my sons received their shots. The ten-year-old experienced mental, physical, and personality deviations almost immediately. Five days later, the left side of his face was paralyzed, followed shortly by his left arm, and then by his abdominal muscles and legs. Our doctors have diagnosed him with central-nervous-system demyelination/autoimmune disorder from serious adverse reaction to hepatitis B. The prognosis and severity of this condition are unknown. I've since found out that the F.D.A. and the C.D.C. keep a record of vaccine reactions in order to monitor the frequency of the ones that are very serious.

Immunization laws are based on the idea that the over-all benefit outweighs any risk to the individual. But when there is no imminent danger to children what possible benefit could outweigh the risk of permanently impairing a life?

BETH TOPP
The Immunizations Vaccinations & You League Foundation
Rosamond, Calif.

Like Atul Gawande ("Whose Body Is It Anyway?," October 4th), I have been on both sides of the physician-patient equation. I am a practicing physician in the specialty of physical medicine and rehabilitation, and also the mother of a child with a chronic kidney condition. I am certainly an informed advocate for my son, but I am not an expert in the treatment of his particular problem, and I expect my son's physician to advise me and give me the benefit of her considerable experience. Some people may feel that the techniques, as Gawande describes them, that a good clinician uses to persuade a patient to choose the treatment the physician desires smack of paternalism, but I say that it is unfair to force a potentially "exhausted, irritable, shattered, or despondent" human being to assume that kind of awful responsibility. Preserving kindness involves shouldering some of the responsibility for patients should they desire it.

SUSAN ZIMMERMAN, M.D.
Millersville, Md.

Although I welcome the move toward patients' autonomy, I also believe that Dr. Gawande is right in saying that patient autonomy can become just as dangerous as physicians' autonomy once was. The most insidious thing about this trend is that doctors now expect patients and their families to inform themselves about risks, and seem happy to be relieved of this responsibility. Three years ago, an M.R.I. revealed an inflammation on my mother's brain stem. After our family's research revealed the risks of a surgical biopsy, we opted for steroid therapy instead, and hoped that the inflammation wasn't due to cancer. When our mother died three months later, from sepsis brought on by pneumonia, which, in turn, was caused by her immune system's response to the steroids, we kicked ourselves for not having done enough research about their side effects. For months afterward, my brother and I were too terrified to read the autopsy report (which ultimately revealed central-nervous-system lymphoma) for fear it might confirm that we the children—not the doctors—had made the wrong decision at each step of the way. Now my "autonomy" makes me feel powerless: I question every prescription I am given, yet I can never do enough research to feel confident in my medical knowledge.

MARY LEWIS
Brooklyn, N.Y.

•

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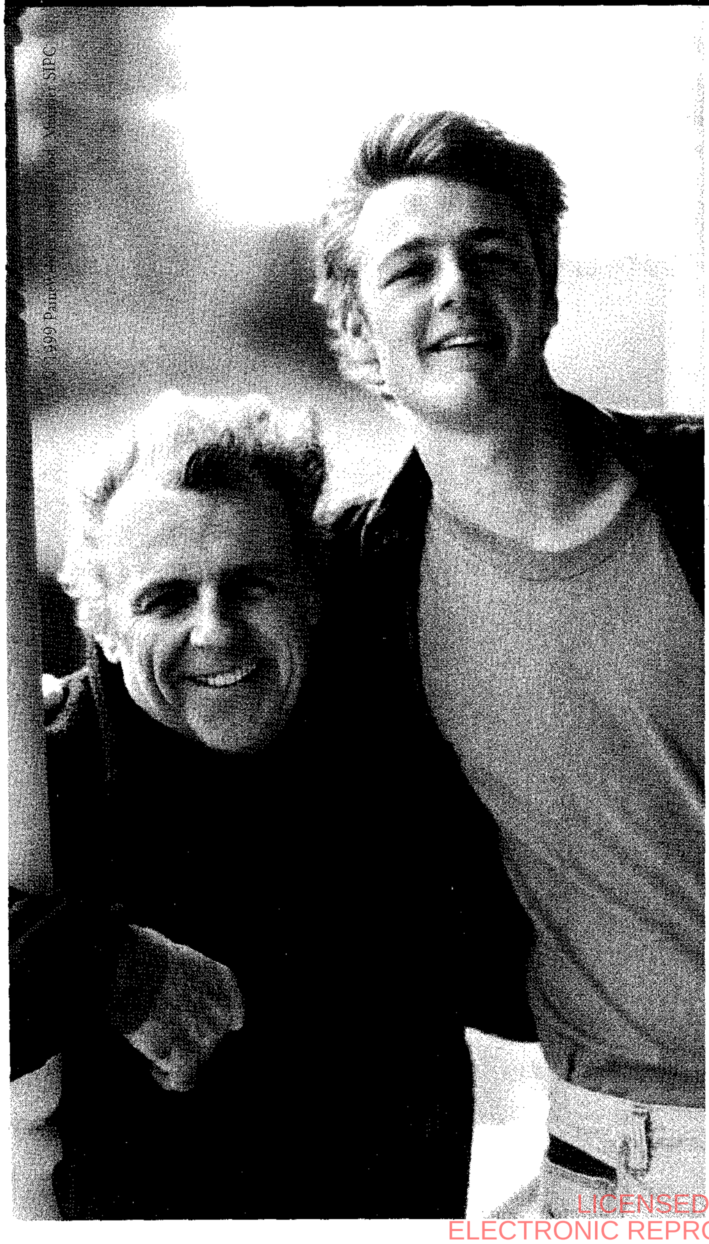

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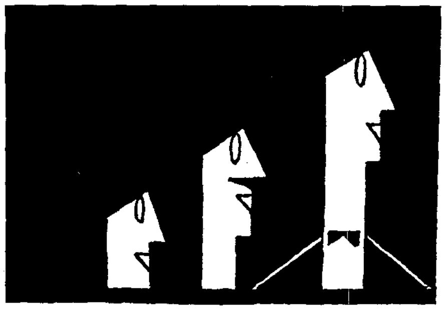

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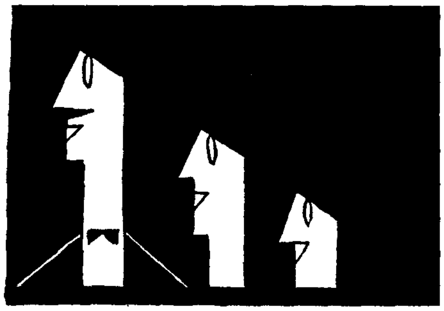


THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Ann Magnuson—The performance artist brings her Halloween show, "Daughter of Horror," to Joe's Pub. Oct. 28-30 at 8:30 and Oct. 31 at 8:30 and 11. (425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

Dinner with Friends—Donald Margulies's latest play is a drama about two couples whose friendship changes when one of them decides to divorce. In previews. (Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave., at 13th St. 239-6200.)

Eclipsed—Patricia Burke Brogan's drama, set in Ireland, follows the lives of four unwed mothers forced to labor as penitents in a convent laundry. In previews. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

Fuddy Meers—A comedy by David Lindsay-Abaire, about an amnesiac trying to regain her memory. In previews through Oct. 31. Opens Nov. 2 at 7:30. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

In the Blood—Suzan-Lori Parks's new play is a modern take on Hawthorne's "The Scarlet Letter." Directed by David Esbjornson. Previews begin Nov. 2. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

James Joyce's The Dead—A musical version of the short story. Preview on Oct. 27. Opens Oct. 28 at 7 and continues through Nov. 14. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

The Jazz Singer—The Jewish Repertory Theatre presents a new musical version of the Samson Raphaelson play, about a man torn between his Orthodox family and his Broadway aspirations. In previews through Oct. 30. Opens Oct. 31 at 7. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

Kiss Me, Kate—Brian Stokes Mitchell and Marin Mazzie star in a revival of the Cole Porter musical, under the direction of Michael Blakemore. In previews. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

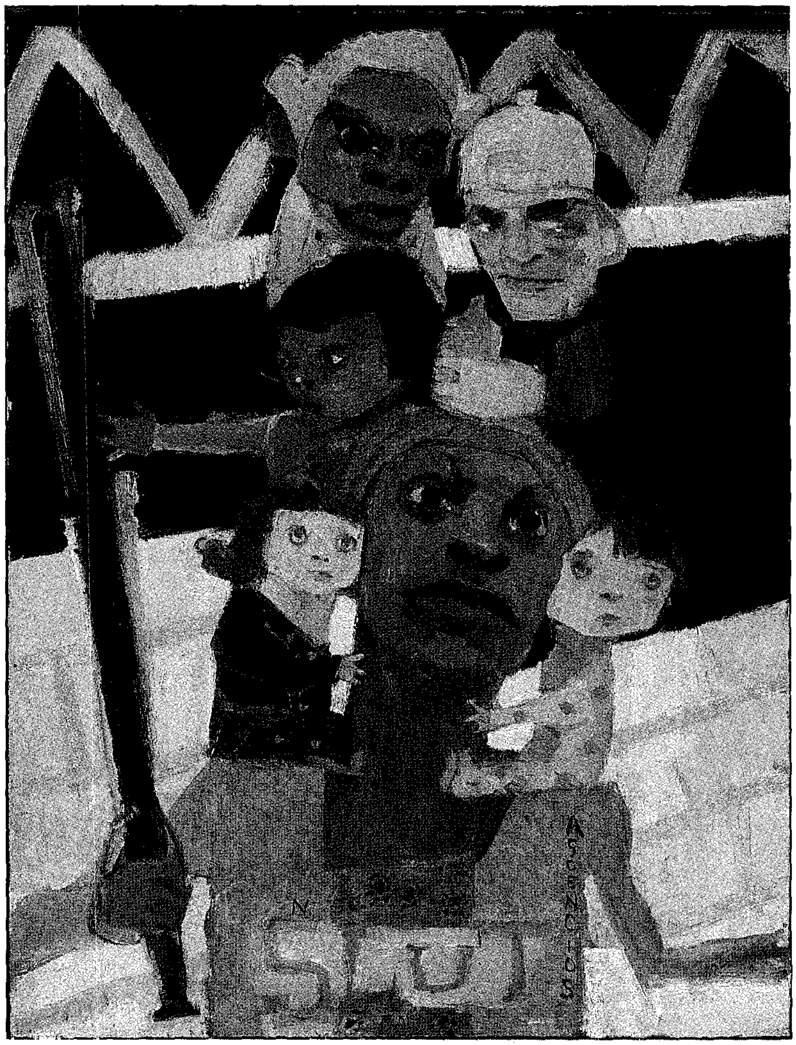
Morning, Noon and Night—Spalding Gray's latest monologue. Sundays and Mondays at 7:30. In previews. (Vivian Beaumont, 150 W. 65th St. 239-6200.)

The Price—A revival of Arthur Miller's 1968 play about a pair of long-estranged brothers brought together by the necessity of disposing of their dead father's possessions. James Naughton is the director. Previews begin Oct. 29. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Putting It Together—A revue celebrating the songs of Stephen Sondheim, starring Carol Burnett. Eric D. Schaeffer is the director. Previews begin Oct. 30. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

The Rainmaker—Jayne Atkinson and Woody Harrelson star in the Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of Richard Nash's 1954 drama. Scott Ellis is the director. In previews. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

Swing!—A musical salute to the dance movement, starring the jazz vocalist Ann Hampton Callaway and a cast of eighteen other singers and dancers. Directed and choreographed by Lynne Taylor-Corbett. Previews begin Nov. 2. (St. James. 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)



"In the Blood," a new play by Suzan-Lori Parks, at the Public Theatre.

N. ASCENCIOS

OPENED RECENTLY

Ancestral Voices—A staged reading, with a rotating cast, of A. R. Gurney's play. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Atlantic Theatre Company—The troupe offers a season of plays by David Mamet. First up: "The Water Engine" and "Mr. Happiness." (336 W. 20th St. 645-1242.)

Avenue A—The 29th Street Rep's production of David Steen's drama about the effects of urban decay. (212 W. 29th St. 465-0575.)

Barefoot Boy with Shoes On—A man living in a New York ghetto apartment tries to find a better life, in a drama by Edwin Sanchez. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4502.)

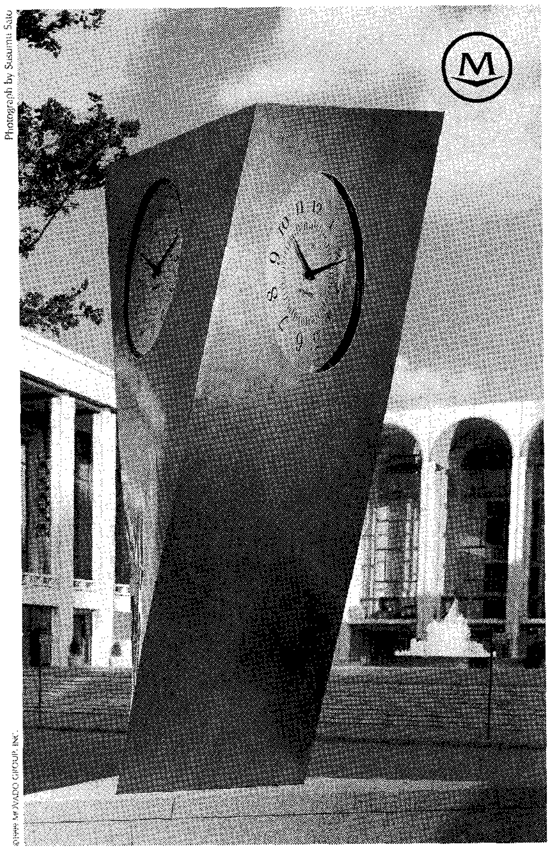
Chesapeake—In a new play by Lee Blessing, Mark Linn-Baker stars as a performance artist scheming to sabotage a right-wing politician. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

The Clearing—Helen Edmundsen's play is a passionate history lesson about Ireland under Cromwell, dramatized through the disintegrating marriage of an Anglo-Irish settler and a born-and-bred Irishwoman. The tensions between principle and pragmatism, between love and intolerance, are an old story, but it's one well told here—and the final sound effect, of a rifle being cocked, reminds us that these passions still reverberate in today's Ireland. The cast of this Blue Light Theatre production is superb, especially Sandra Shipley as a neighbor and Michael Countryman as the settler. With an elegantly versatile set by Jeff Cowie and seamless direction by Tracy Brigden. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 279-4200. Closes Oct. 31.)

Contact—A dance-play coconceived by Susan Stroman (choreography and direction) and John Weidman (book). (Reviewed in our issue of 10/18-25/99.) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

The Countess—Gregory Murphy's play, which tells the story of how the nineteenth-century art critic John Ruskin's wife left him for the painter John Everett Millais, is a vivid exploration of the self-indulgent pleasures of small-mindedness (in this case, Ruskin's and his parents'). (Samuel Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 594-2826.)

The Country Club—Douglas Carter Beane's satire on the young suburban set is loaded with witty dialogue, and the production is graced by the Drama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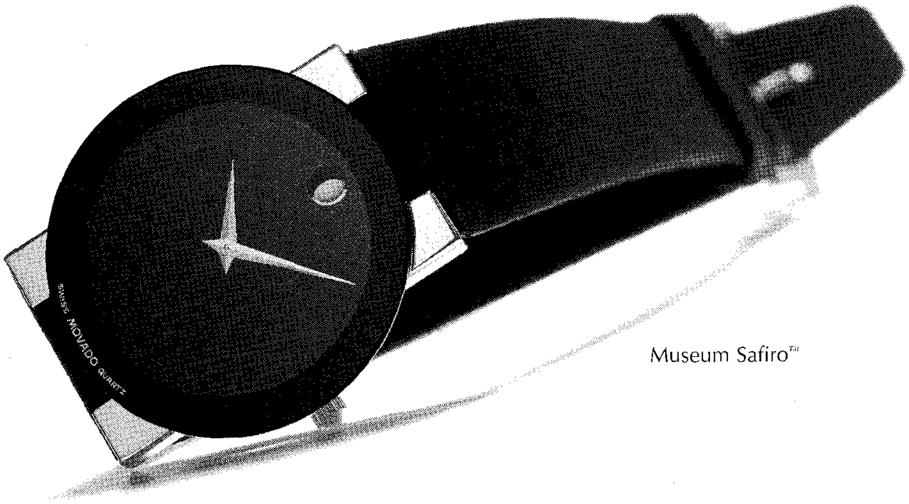

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Dept.'s always good acting and a fine set, but Beane's writing suffers from a peculiar shallowness almost worthy of his characters. They satirize themselves, too, but it all has the effect of a valentine rather than a biting sendup. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 541-8441. Closes Nov. 6.)

Cranes—Scott Elliott directs the New Group in a drama by Dmitry Lipkin, about two Russian-Jewish immigrant families who are reunited after years of estrangement. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

Dame Edna: The Royal Tour—Calling all possums: the singer, swami, grief counsellor, and children's book illustrator makes her Broadway début. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Epic Proportions—Kristin Chenoweth heads the cast of a new comedy by Larry Coen and David Crane. (10/18-25/99) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

The Exact Center of the Universe—Joan Vail Thorne's small-town comedy, starring Frances Sternhagen. (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

An Experiment with an Air Pump—Linda Emond and Daniel Gerroll are in the cast of a new drama by Shelagh Stephenson. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 313 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Fully Committed—This funny one-man, one-act comedy is a tribute to starving actors everywhere, who slave away in the food-service industry to make ends meet. Mark Setlock plays a lovable reservations clerk at a tony unnamed Manhattan restaurant, who deals with a daily deluge of calls from dying-to-be diners. Setlock works overtime impersonating such callers as Naomi Campbell's overzealous assistant ("Thanks a gazillion!") and a stubborn mafioso, among others. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3366. Closes Oct. 30.)

Give Me Your Answer, Do!—The Irish playwright Brian Friel's latest drama investigates the havoc that the cruel push and pull between art and commerce wreaks on the lives of artists. Two Irish friends and novelists, one a commercial failure (John Glover), the other a best-seller (Gawn Grainger, in an anxiously heartbreaking performance), come together with their wives (and some in-laws and a literary archivist) for a late-summer afternoon of cocktails and angst. One of them feels guilty because he has sold out, the other feels guilty because he might want to, and the whole thing builds to a vaguely "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" fervor in the second act. But the performances are exhilarating, so you forgive the unnecessarily melodramatic ending. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

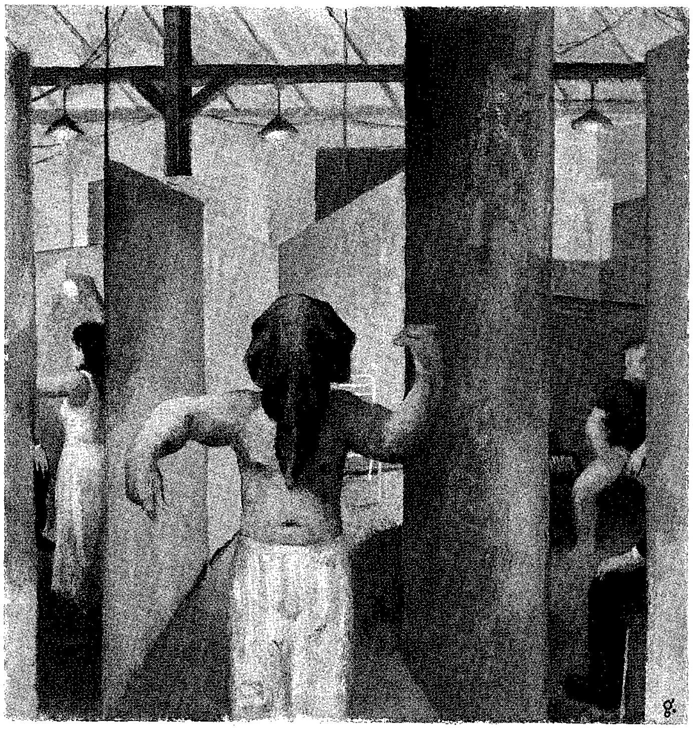
Gospel Is—A musical by Vy Higginsen and Ken Wydro, which traces the history of gospel. (Williams Lafayette Theatre, 2225 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Blvd., at 131st St. 280-1045.)

Gum—A sexy, sharp one-act, inspired by a newspaper article about teen-age girls in Egypt who claimed to be sexually aroused by forbidden foreign chewing gum. Centered on two sisters who live behind walls—both literally (the stage backdrop is a high fence) and figuratively—this drama by the young playwright Karen Hartman tries to pack a lot of weighty material onto a small plate. Along with defiant mantras against the patriarchy ("I will chew"), however, the script is laced with a lightness that pokes as much fun at Western commercialization as it does at Middle Eastern orthodoxy. Still, the most powerful moments are those in which the disturbing realities of women living in repressive cultures are brought to life. (Women's Project & Productions Theatre, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200. Closes Oct. 31.)

Kat and the Kings—A rock-and-roll musical set in Cape Town in 1957. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Keep Bangin'—"Stomp" showed that you can cook up an evening of theatre out of percussion alone, but this show, directed by the fabled tap dancer Savion Glover, proves it better. It's an unslick production (the costumes are presumably from the performers' private collections). The point is the drumming alone: African, Caribbean, Latin, New York-style. The ten-man cast is led by Jared Crawford (whom Glover reportedly discovered playing on a midtown sidewalk). With his million-toothed smile, firestorm of dreads, and rare genius, he lifts the whole thing into a kind of art heaven. (Players Theatre, 115 MacDougal St. 254-5076.)

Look Back in Anger—A Classic Stage Company revival of John Osborne's 1956 drama. (136 E. 13th St. 677-4210, ext. 10. Closes Nov. 14.)



Cie Felix Ruckert, in "Hautnah," at the Joyce SoHo.

GERARD DUBOIS

Nirvanov—A rock-and-roll adaptation of Chekhov's "Ivanov." Oct. 29-30 at 11. (78th Street Theatre Lab, 236 W. 78th St. 946-1284.)

North Atlantic—A multimedia work in progress written by James Strahs and staged by the Wooster Group. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651. Closes Nov. 21.)

Odin Teatret—Denmark's experimental-theatre group comes to La Mama for a brief engagement, performing seven plays from its repertoire. Performances continue through Oct. 31. (74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

Saturday Night Fever—The musical, based on the 1977 film. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Shockheaded Peter—A "junk opera" version of Heinrich Hoffman's macabre nineteenth-century book of cautionary tales for children. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Closes Oct. 31.)

Showy Lady Slipper—Richard Maxwell's newest play, which explores the idiosyncrasies of an idle conversation among a group of women. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes Nov. 14.)

Stars in Your Eyes—A musical by Chip Meyrelles, set in two small towns during the Kennedy Administration. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

Tulpa—The Target Margin Theatre opens a season dedicated to new works with a play by Todd Alcott, in which a religious leader travels to New York to spread her mystical secrets. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. Closes Nov. 6.)

The Vagina Monologues—Eve Ensler, in her one-woman disquisition. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

The Winds of God—The premise of this Japanese import is weird: two shlumpy modern-day comedians are somehow reverse-reincarnated into the bodies of kamikaze pilots in the particularly inauspicious month of August 1945. But it works. The script is, in the end, a brave study of Japanese culture, and much of the evening is very funny. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074. Closes Oct. 31.)

LONG RUNS

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN: Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CABARET:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **DEATH OF A SALESMAN:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. (Closes Nov. 7.) . . . **DE LA GUARDA:** Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FOOTLOOSE:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **FOSSE:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH:** Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **IT AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT THE BLUES:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE-NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RAGTIME:** Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100. . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Ibis, 327 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **SIDE MAN:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. (Closes Oct. 31.) . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **THINGS YOU SHOULDN'T SAY**

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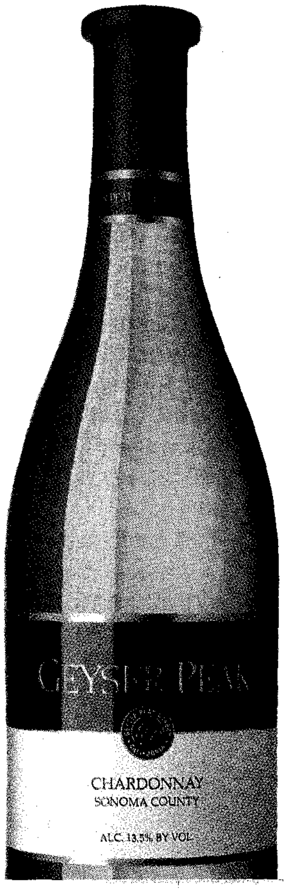

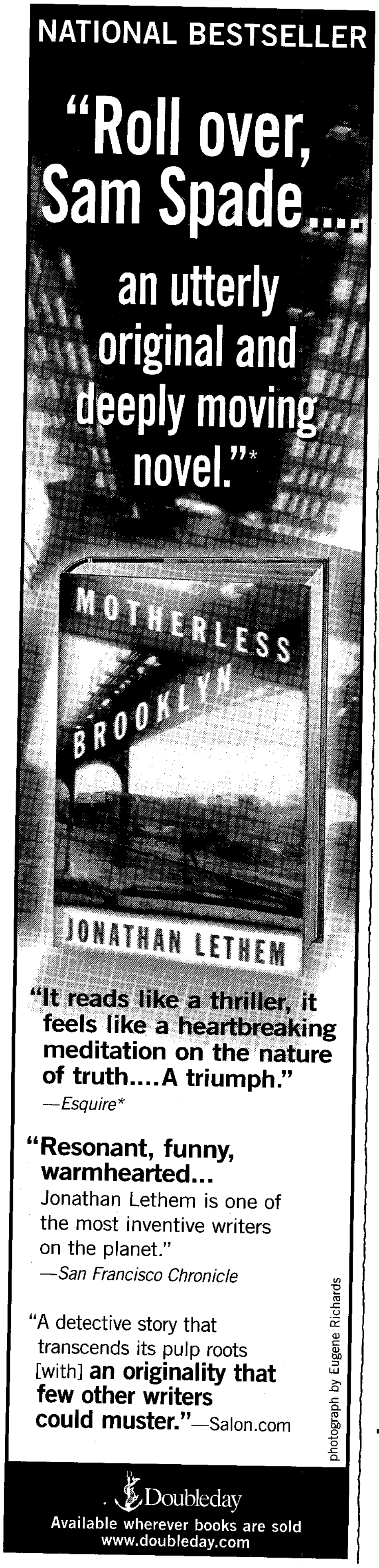

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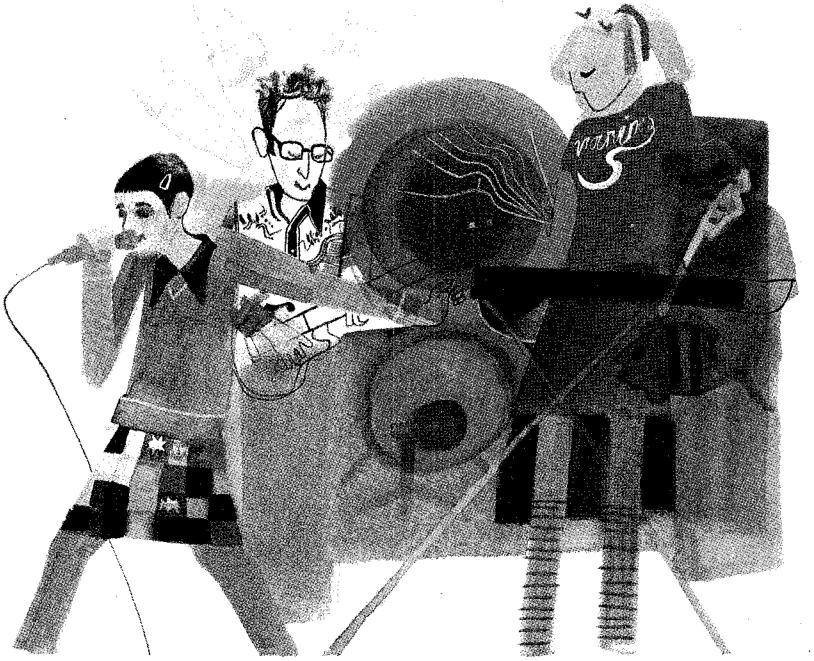
PAST MIDNIGHT: Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE WEIR:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200. . . . **WIT:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE—Oct. 27 at 8: "Push Comes to Shove," "Fall River Legend," and the première of "Getting Closer." . . . ¶ Oct. 28 at 8: "Pas de Déesses," "Fall River Legend," and the première of "Baroque Game." . . . ¶ Oct. 29 at 8: "Getting Closer," "Diversion of Angels," "Known by Heart" pas de deux, and "Push Comes to Shove." . . . ¶ Oct. 30 at 2: "Without Words," "Baroque Game," and "Billy the Kid." . . . ¶ Oct. 30 at 8: "Getting Closer," "Fall River Legend," and "Push Comes to Shove." . . . ¶ Oct. 31 at 2: "Without Words," "Fall River Legend," and "Baroque Game." . . . ¶ Oct. 31 at 7:30: "Getting Closer," "Meadow," and "Baroque Game." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)



Marine Research plays the Bowery Ballroom.

ANNABEL WRIGHT

"MORNING SONG"—The eight-member Needcompany, under the direction of Jan Lauwers, presents the second installment of "No Beauty for Me There, Where Human Life Is Rare," which focusses on a character named Liliane Grandiflora and her improvised family. Their kinship dramas take place on a loftlike stage divided into a rehearsal area with folding chairs, a cleared space for dancing, and a working kitchen. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100. Oct. 27 and Oct. 29-30 at 7:30 and Oct. 31 at 3.)

"PARADIS"—The Paris-based Compagnie Montalvo-Hervieu combines a montage of projected video images (of mammals wild and domestic) with a range of choreographic styles, from modern dance and hip-hop to traditional dances of the Antilles. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Oct. 26-29 at 8, Oct. 30 at 2 and 8, and Oct. 31 at 2 and 7:30.)

"HAUTNAH"—Cie Felix Ruckert, from Germany, offers audience members the chance to negotiate with dancers of their choice for one-on-one performances. The Joyce SoHo serves as a café-cum-bargaining floor during the run, with a warren of adjoining private performance spaces to which dancer and viewer can retire. (155 Mercer St. No reservations; tickets at the door. For more information, call 924-0077. Oct. 26-30 at 7.)

"ARIA SPINTA"—Déjà Donné Production, a Prague-based troupe under the direction of Lenka Flory and Simone Sandroni, presents a collaborative work in which an international cast of dancers take pleasure in the difficulties of communication. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Oct. 27-29 at 8 and Oct. 30 at 3.)

"THE FALL"—A nine-member Dutch company performs a full-length work choreographed by Truus Bronkhorst and Marien Jongewaard in which segments of nearly violent sportlike contests alternate with passages of ritualized dance. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Oct. 28-30 at 8:30.)

INFINITY DANCE THEATRE—The ten-member company, founded by Kitty Lunn, a former member of the Washington National Ballet who became paralyzed from the waist down in 1987, performs works choreographed for a mixed company of dancers with and without disabilities. (Riverside Church, 121st St. at Claremont Ave. For reservations, call 800-799-5831. Oct. 29-30 at 8 and Oct. 31 at 2.)

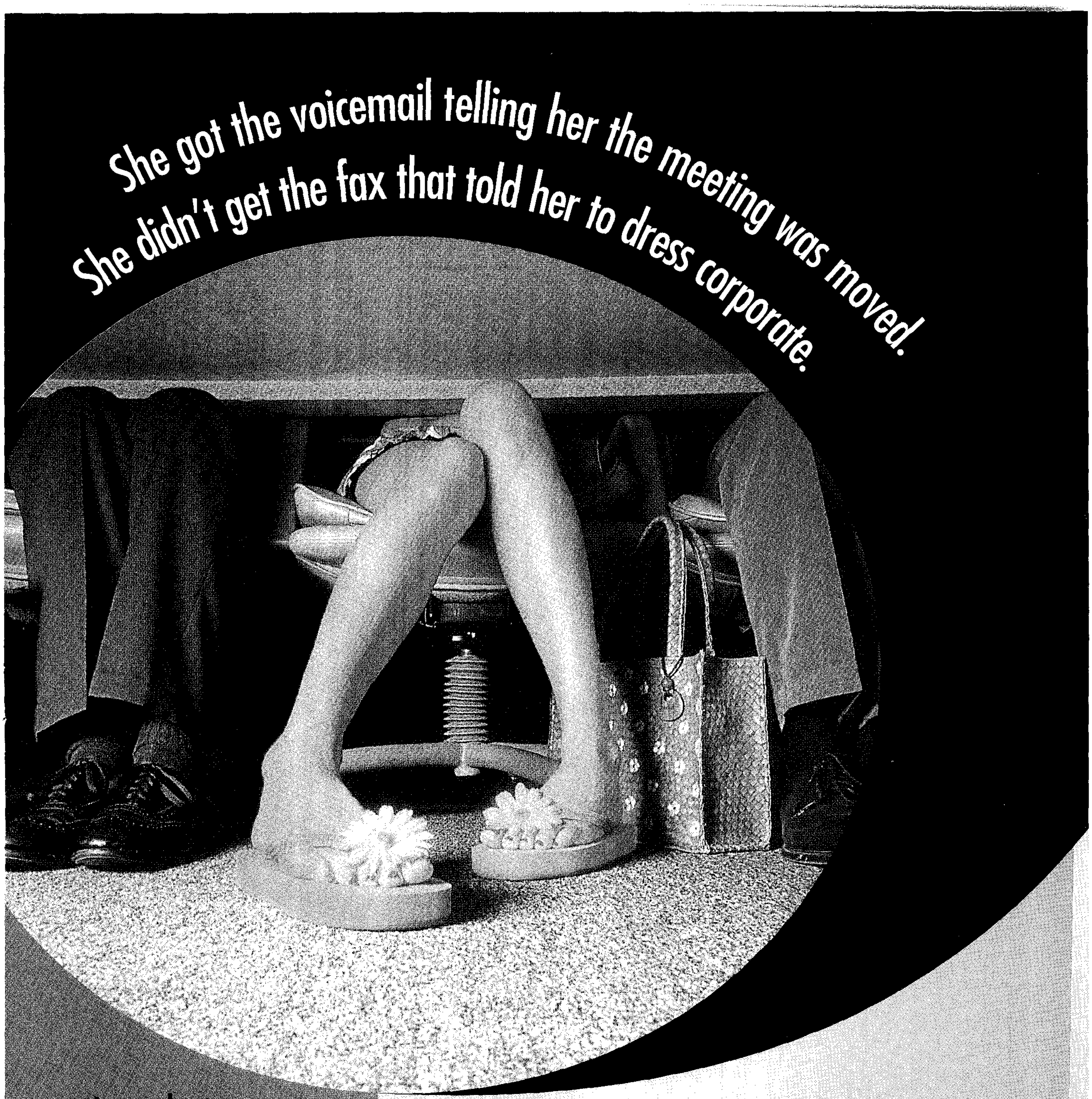
DON COSSACKS OF ROSTOV—The eighty-member troupe of singers, dancers, and musicians performs such traditional works as "Just Steppe Is All Around" and "Our Cossack Squadron Has a Good Commander." (Lehman Concert Hall, 250 Bedford Park Blvd., the Bronx. 718-960-8833. Oct. 31 at 3.)

"LAVA LOVE"—Sarah East Johnson's troupe, Lava, presents a slate of circus-skill routines—trapeze and balancing acts, hoop diving, human pyramids, hula-hoop and pogo-stick numbers—performed with subtleties of pace and emphasis taken from the world of dance. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. 226-0051. Oct. 28-29 at 8 and Oct. 30 at 3 and 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

BEN FOLDS FIVE—This Chapel Hill trio rose up from the alternative-rock morass with a fairly unprecedented concept: a front man who could sing well and play the piano like a Gen X Billy Joel. With his nerdy looks, Ben Folds makes even Bruce Hornsby seem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like a rock star, but his plangent delivery has reintroduced some long-lost acerbity to pop songwriting. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. Oct. 27 at 8.)

Natalie Merchant—She whirls, she mewls, she does everything but swing a shawl: the Clinton Administration's answer to Stevie Nicks. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Oct. 27 at 8.)

Paolo Conte—The suave Italian songsmith. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Oct. 28 at 8.)

Ricky Martin—The hips that launched the latest Latin invasion finally shake in the flesh. Martin's success may be the result of a healthy dose of hype, but when it comes to entertaining a hungry crowd, he really satisfies. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Oct. 28-29 at 8.)

Moby—The person least likely to become a pop star, this thirty-three-year-old avowed Christian, vegan, and great-great-grandnephew of Herman Melville was once electronica's poster boy. He keeps a lower profile these days, but his new album, "Play," which samples, to astonishing effect, Bessie Jones and other early-twentieth-century African-American artists, is exceptional. (Roxy, 515 W. 18th St. 645-5156. Oct. 28 at 9.)

Bill Frisell Quartet—Don't come to Frisell's excellent new recording, "Good Dog, Happy Man," expecting heavy jazz content. The brilliant guitarist and composer has always had his hands in quite a few musical pots—lately, country, folk, and rock are commanding his attention. (St. Ann's Church, 157 Montague St., Brooklyn. 718-858-2424. Oct. 29 at 8.)

Eleftheria Arvanitaki—A seductive songstress from Greece, backed by an eight-piece orchestra featuring the accomplished Armenian-American oud master Ara Dinkjian. (Town Hall. Oct. 30 at 8.)

Cypress Hill—The cannabis-friendly Los Angeles-based hip-hop trio. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Oct. 31 at 8.)

Kid Rock—Pop music's latest parental nightmare is a flaxen-haired oddity who might have made a convincing pimp on "Starsky & Hutch." On "Devil Without a Cause," the Kid's hot-selling début, millennial hip-hop meets suburban-basement electric guitars. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center. Nov. 1-2 at 7:30.)

Bette Midler—Ms. M. has calmed down a tad since she went Hollywood (and started cleaning up our highways), but she's still capable of turning an arena into a raging bathhouse. (Nassau Coliseum. 516-794-9300. Nov. 2 at 8.)

CLUBS

(Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Oct. 27: The **FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS, CLARENCE (GATEMOUTH) BROWN**, and **C. J. CHENIER**. The Thunderbirds' barroom blues will never go out of style, but Brown and Chenier are the ones that make this triple bill worthwhile. Brown's past seventy, but you'd never know it from his sinewy sound. Like virtually every other Texas blues guitarist of the past half-century, he owes much to T-Bone Walker, but, unlike his fellow-disciples, he's always sought to expand the vocabulary of the blues, mixing in elements of country, Cajun, and jazz. Chenier, the son of the legendary zydeco accordionist Clifton Chenier, straps on his father's old fifty-pound piano-key accordion and leads his Red Hot Louisiana Band through a repertory of waltzes, two-steps, and joist-shaking rhythms. Nov. 2: On his new album, "In Reverse," **MATTHEW SWEET** regresses blithely into a candy-colored idyll of sixties-flavored garage pop. But no amount of nostalgia can obscure his sharp, modern song craft.

"The Hurricane Series: Antoinette" (1999), by Ruth Marten, at Littlejohn Contemporary (see Galleries—Uptown).

Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Oct. 27: A night of hard-rocking indie power chords with **DON CABALLERO**. Oct. 28: **MARINE RESEARCH**. Thirteen years ago in Oxford, England, singer Amelia Fletcher and her brother Matthew, who played drums, formed a short-lived band called Talulah Gosh and turned out some incredible pop confections. A few years later the pair created the quintet Heavenly, which delivered more of the same sweets. It all came to an abrupt halt, however, in 1996, when Matthew committed suicide. Marine Research, which consists of the players from Heavenly plus a new drummer, represents Amelia Fletcher's return to the world of smart bubble-gum pop. To judge from its new album, "Sounds from the Gulf Stream," she hasn't lost any of her shine. Oct. 29-30: **ZEN TRICKSTERS**, the erstwhile Grateful Dead cover band, is now bent on its own strange trip of improvisational jams. Nov. 1: The dashing **ROBYN HITCHCOCK**, the godfather of eighties neo-psychedelia, continues his surreal journey. Nov. 2-3: Dead Can Dance guitarist **BRENDAN PERRY**. With **KRISTIN HERSH**.

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Oct. 29: The local ensemble **CHURCH OF BETTY** combines classical Indian and Pakistani music with downtown funk and rock. With the clever pop of Los Angeles's **THE NEGRO PROBLEM** and singer-songwriter **MARTHA WAINWRIGHT**.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Oct. 30-31: The Crescent City jazz-funk outfit **GALACTIC**. With **THE DIRTY DOZEN BRASS BAND**. Nov. 2: The Werewolf returns. **WARREN ZEVON**, no longer much of a commercial threat, continues to be inspired by his misanthropic muse. His latest, "Life'll Kill Ya," is a sad-sack homage to life's darker pleasures.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Oct. 27-28: **MOMUS**. He lists Rabelais and Martial among his songwriting influences and his music—from Brecht to Beck on Moog and simulated harpsichord—is suitably challenging. Live, draped on a chair and sporting a pirate eye-patch, his obscurities coalesce into a sharp and entertaining experience. Oct. 30-31: The neo-psychedelia of **OLIVIA TREMOR CONTROL**.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—Oct. 28: **THE NEGRO PROBLEM** (see Brownies). Oct. 29: **MOMUS** (see the Knitting Factory). Also on Oct. 29: Chicagoan and former Sea and Cake guitarist **ARCHER PREWITT**, whose new solo album, "White Sky," is a finely orchestrated (his group includes a full string section) collection of caressing yet brisk windswept pop. Oct. 31: The Portland, Oregon, indie duo **QUASI**. With the multi-instrumentalist **MARY TIMONY**, who once led the seminal indie-rock band Helium. Nov. 2: **ROBYN HITCHCOCK** (see the Bowery Ballroom).

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Oct. 27: **LOCAL H**, who make a big sound with just a guitarist and a drummer. Oct. 29: The whimsical power pop of Boston's **PAPAS FRITAS**. Oct. 30: **ARCHER PREWITT** (see Maxwell's). Nov. 2: The New York trio **MARCY PLAYGROUND**, which once enjoyed about ten minutes in the spotlight with the creepy, irresistible hit "Sex & Candy."

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

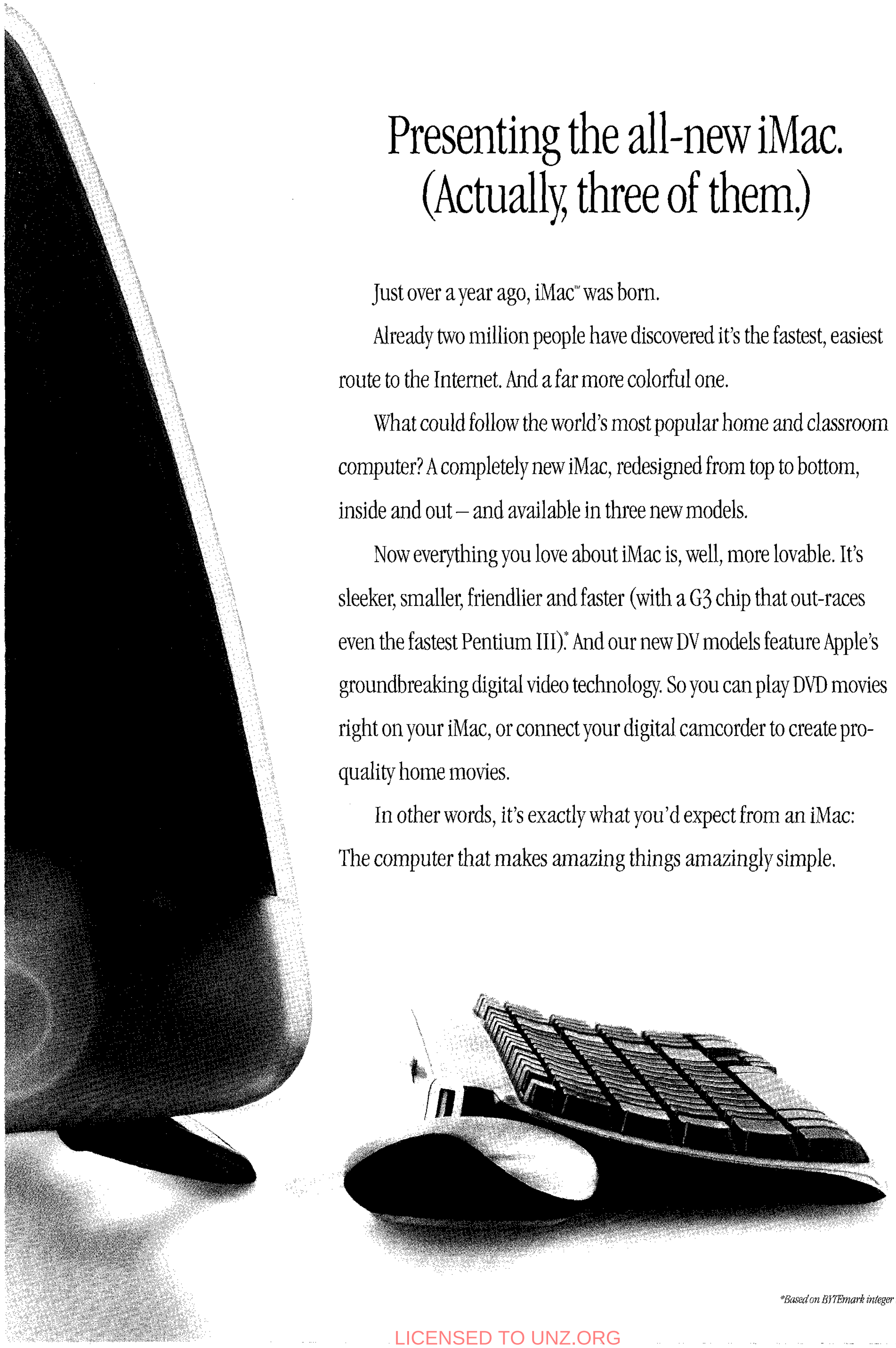
Bam Café, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4139)—Oct. 29: The flavorful and underrated saxophonist **MICHAEL HASHIM**, who brings a strong historical sense and a true flesh-and-blood urgency to pre-bop idioms and more modern material.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—**NANCY WILSON** burst onto the scene back in 1959 with a thrilling voice, a tremendous presence, a brilliant feel for the music, and a smoldering beauty that was impossible to resist. She just as quickly went the glossy supper-club route, playing the big casinos, making television appearances, and recording lush, uninspired albums. But live (she's here with her trio through Oct. 31) she's still got it. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—**BOBBY SHORT** presides at the Café Carlyle through New Year's Eve. Monday evenings feature the **EDDIE DAVIS NEW ORLEANS JAZZ BAND**, with **WOODY ALLEN** on clarinet. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, pianist **BARBARA CARROLL** is in attendance.

Iridium, 48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Oct. 31: Chamber jazz of a high order is assured at this encounter of harmonica player **TOOTS THIELEMANS**, pianist **KENNY WERNER**, and

Re-birth announcement.



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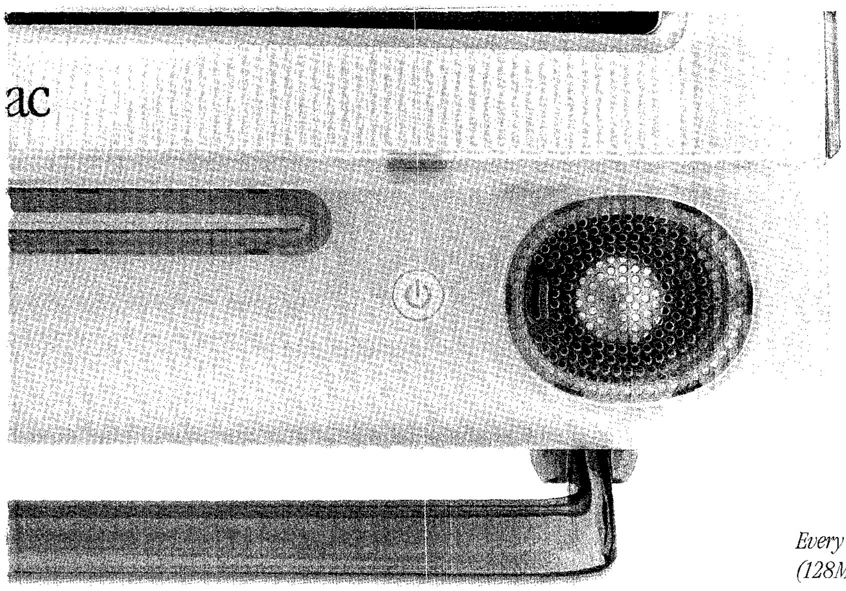

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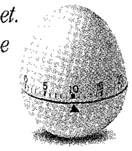

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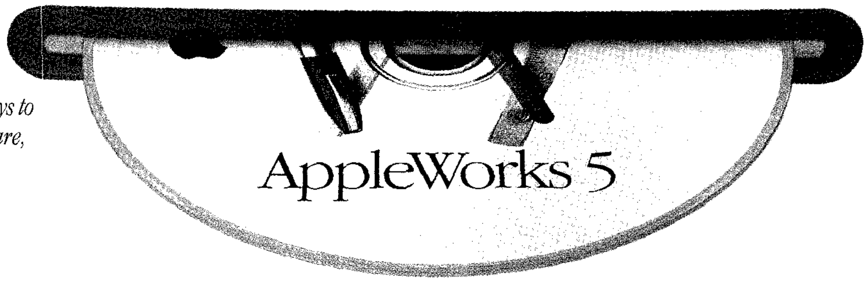
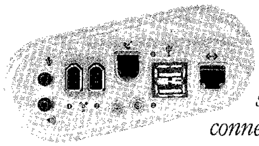
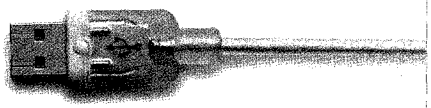
Easy loading. The new iMac is the first computer to feature an elegant slot-loading CD or DVD drive. No more sliding trays to fumble with as you load software, music CDs or DVD movies.



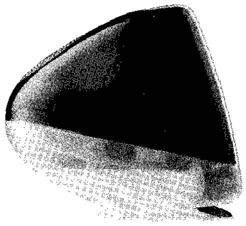


Point and plug. A new easy-access side panel makes connecting the built-in 56K modem, Ethernet, USB and high-speed FireWire® (in DV models) a snap.

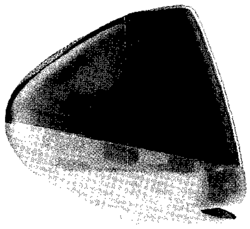
Blazing peripherals. iMac DV models have superfast FireWire built in, so you can easily connect to high-speed devices like digital camcorders and external disk drives.



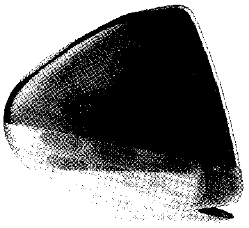
Expand at will. Dual-channel USB lets you add over 100 devices – from joysticks to Zip drives – with no reconfiguring or restarting.



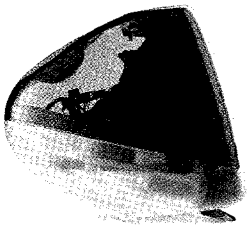
Lime



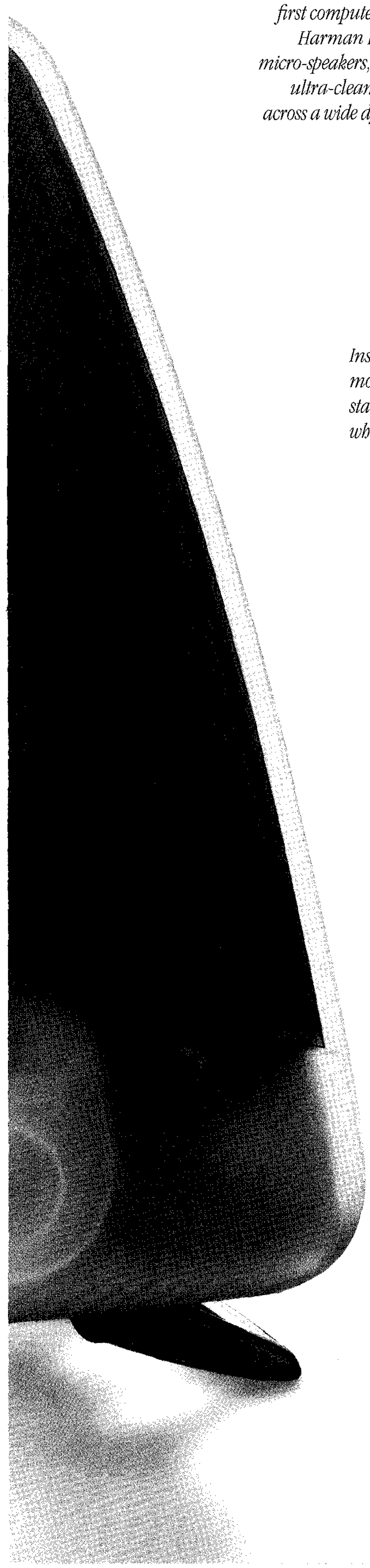
Grape

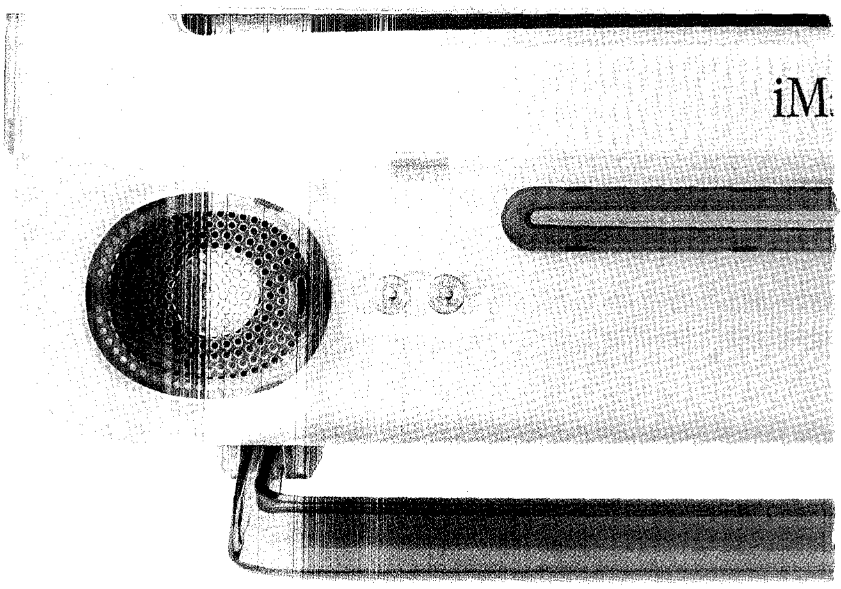


Blueberry



Graphite

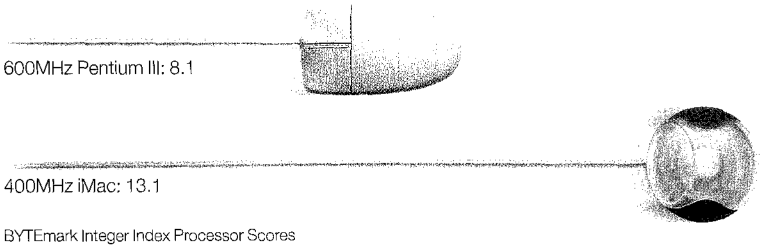




Now hear this: iMac is the first computer to integrate Harman Kardon's new micro-speakers, which deliver ultra-clean stereo sound across a wide dynamic range.

Instant gratification. No more waiting through a long startup. iMac wakes up right where you left off last time.

All-new recipe. All



Speed thrills. The G3 chip in every iMac (up to 400MHz) out-duels even the fastest Pentium III processor in PCs costing twice as much.

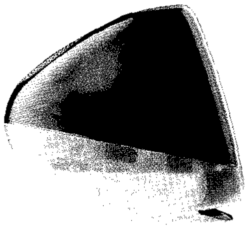
Quiet
Please

Silence is golden. Unlike PCs, iMac doesn't need a fan inside. It's ingeniously engineered to be the world's quietest desktop computer.

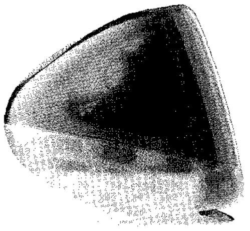
Let the games begin. A built-in ATI RAGE 128 VR graphics accelerator with 8MB of graphics memory lets you play the most hyper-realistic 3D games. (We've included two to get you started.)

rage
RAGE 128 VR

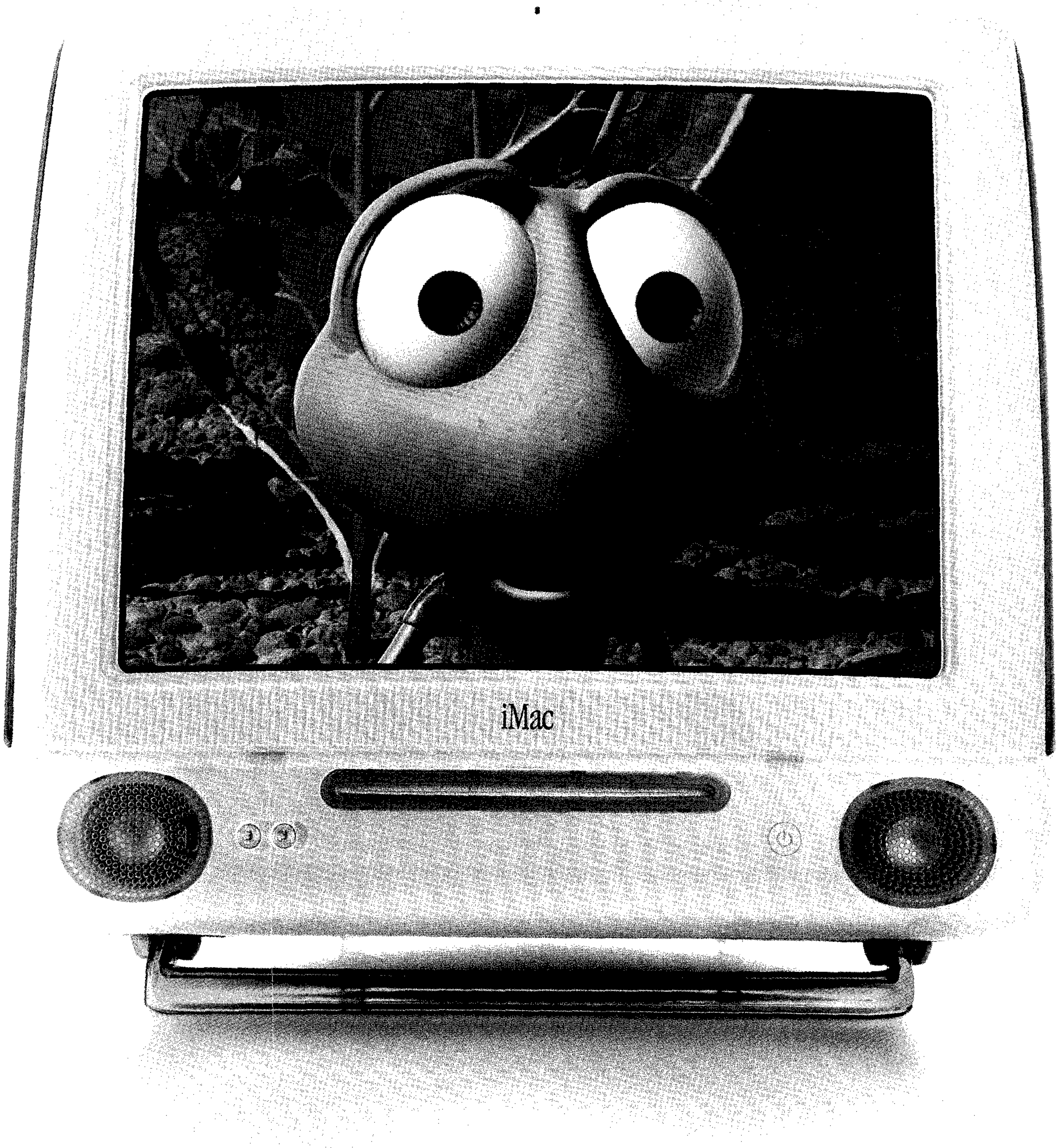
Music to the eyes. iMac has been resculpted so it's smaller, sleeker and more translucent. Still in five flavors (DV model), plus a new Special Edition in Graphite.



Strawberry



Tangerine


iMac

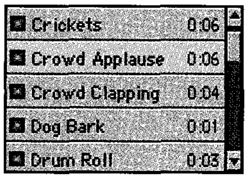
Play the classics.

iMac meets Hollywood. With the iMac DV models, just slide a DVD movie* into the slot and instantly turn your iMac into a personal movie theater. With its full-screen, high-res image, the show is positively cinematic – complete with heart-thumping sound.

iMac gives you all the benefits of movies on DVD, including direct access to your favorite scenes and extra material you won't find on traditional videos. It can save you money, too. Because now you don't have to buy an extra TV and DVD player for the kid's room, den or classroom.

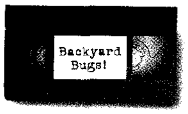
iMac comes with everything you need to start watching DVD movies right out of the box. (Popcorn optional.)

*DVDs not included.



Crickets	0:06
Crowd Applause	0:06
Crowd Clapping	0:04
Dog Bark	0:01
Drum Roll	0:03

Crash, bang, boom. Applause. iMac makes it easy to add sound effects to your movie.

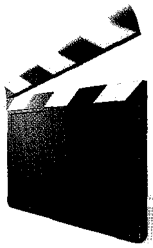


Send your finished masterpiece back through your digital camcorder to make VHS copies. Now all your friends can enjoy it, whether they own a computer or not.

The world is your audience. Turn your home video into a QuickTime® movie clip so you can e-mail it to friends and family. Or post it on your own website.

File
Edit
Help
iMac

Superfast FireWire is built into every iMac DV model. So you can directly transfer your videos from digital camcorder to iMac and back again – in pristine digital quality.



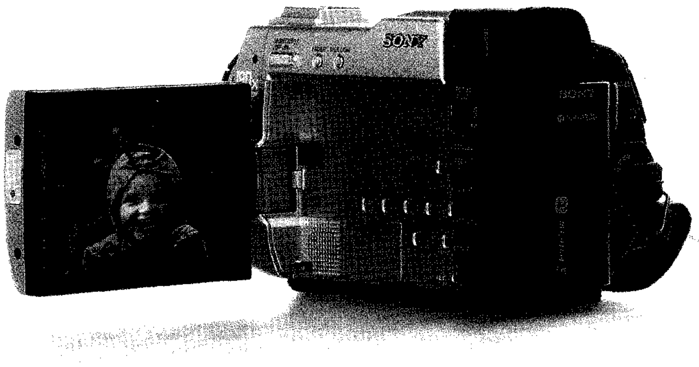
With iMac's new iMovie™ software, you're the director. Re-arrange scenes, cut out boring parts, add dissolves, cross-fades and other transitions. Then end your epic properly – with scrolling credits.

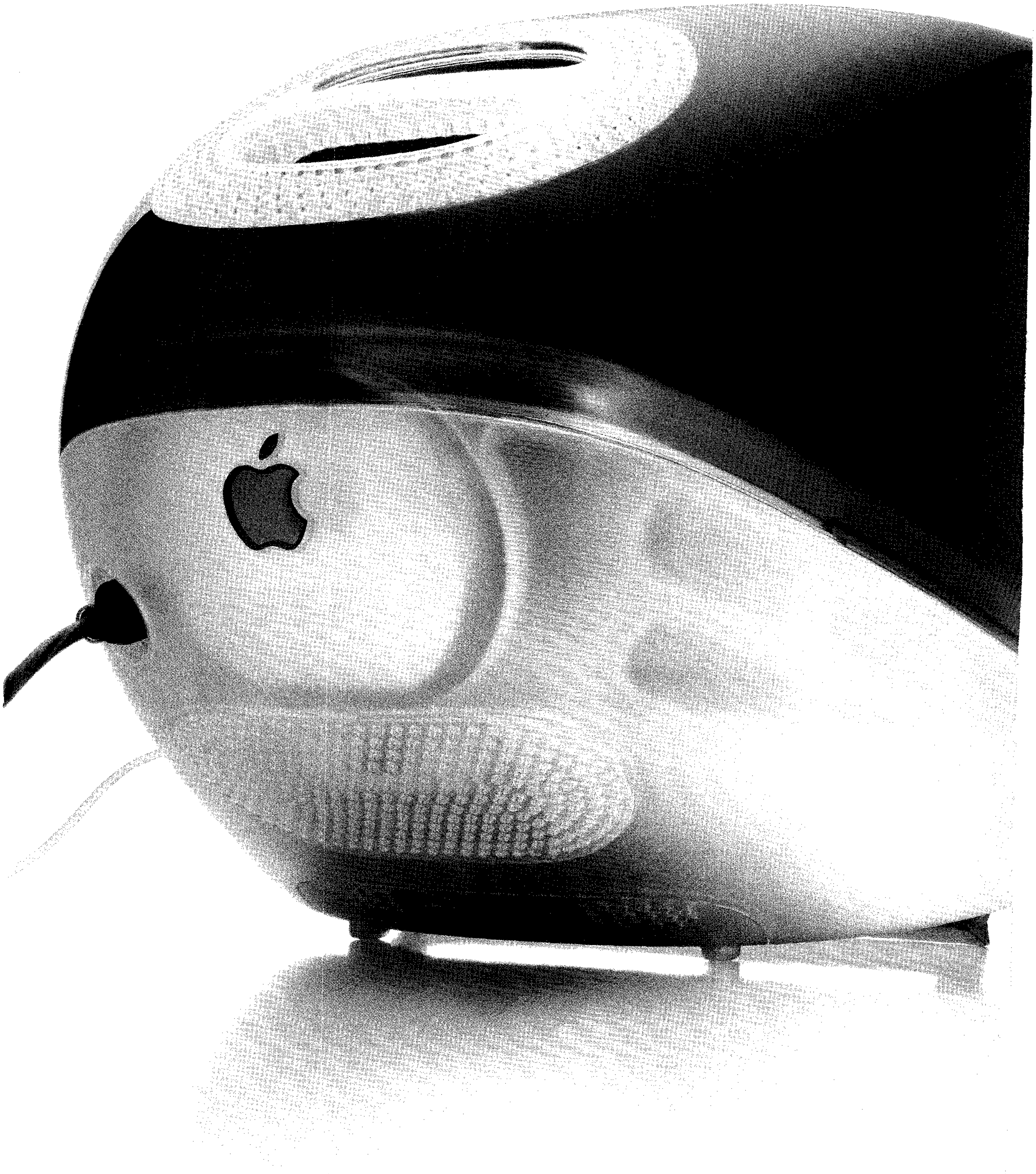
Feeling electric? Acoustic? Spice up your flick with music from your favorite CDs. And make it sound as great as it looks.

Or make them yourself.

Presenting the next revolution: Desktop Video. With the iMac DV models, it's easy to bring out your inner Spielberg. Just connect your digital camcorder to iMac's built-in FireWire port and launch iMac's new iMovie software. Next, digitally transfer your video footage into iMac (with zero loss of quality) and start directing: Re-arrange scenes. Trim out the boring parts. Add transitions, special effects, scrolling titles – even your own soundtrack.

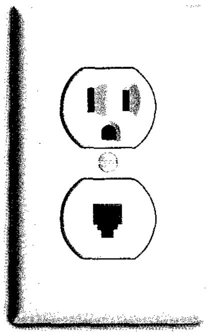
Then send your finished movie back through the camcorder to make VHS copies. Or send clips to friends via e-mail. Or even post them on your website. With iMac, you've got everything you need to go Hollywood. Except, of course, a really good agent.





The easiest way to connect to the Internet.

Amazing, but true: 90% of all iMac owners are connected to the Internet.[*] And most of them got there on the very first day. That's because iMac's setup instructions are stunningly uncomplicated: Plug in, connect the phone line and answer a few simple questions. Presto, instant Internet.



Now you're sharing e-mail with friends and family. Shopping in places you never even knew existed. Visiting the world's great museums. Researching projects for school or business. Reuniting with long-lost friends. Exploring the universe. There's literally no limit.

You're a fully certified Internet surfer. All within a few minutes of taking your iMac out of the box.

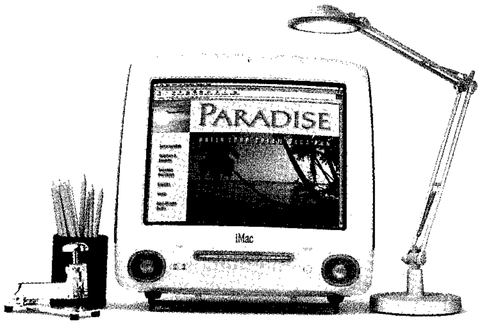
---

[*] *Based on U.S. customer survey.*

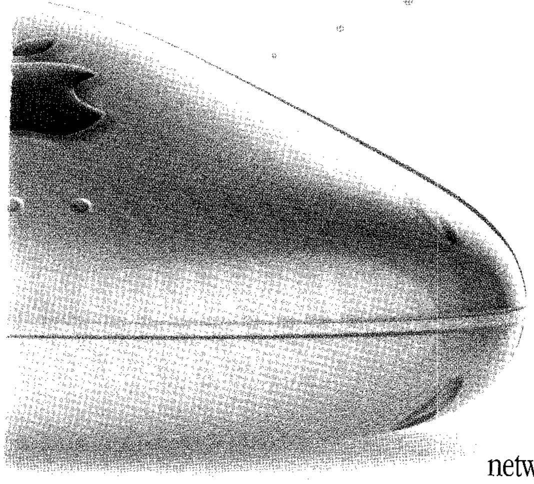
Welcome to the
Interactive
Shakespeare
Project
Introduction
Teachers' Guide
Measure for Measure
The Virtual Globe Theatre
iMac

7:48 am. Erin uses her new iMac to conduct web research on Shakespeare while getting ready for school.

itchen, den,
r tree house.


PARADISE
iMac

7:48 am. Mom scours the web for travel deals while she proofs the term paper Alex just sent via his wireless connection.



be anywhere within 150 feet of the base station – literally half a football field away.* All ten users can visit different websites simultaneously, or exchange files, or play the latest network games with each other – all without any wires.

There's no longer any need to worry about placing your iMac near a phone line or tearing up your walls to rewire. You can put your iMac wherever you want, and change your mind as often as you want. The future of the Internet has definitely arrived. No strings attached.

**Range depends on site conditions.*

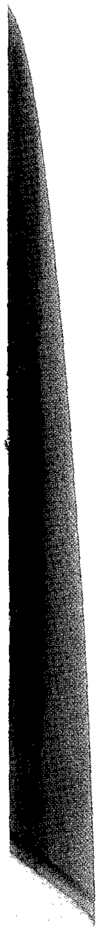
majorleaguebaseball.com
Marquee Matchup
iMac

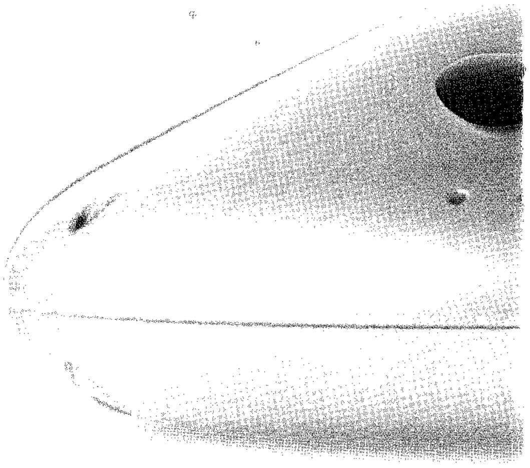
7:48 am. Dad's on pancake duty. And cruising the Internet for stock quotes, world news and delicious details from last night's game.

From the ki
classroom o

iBook
BUGDOM

7:48 am. Alex uses his iBook™ to check his favorite game website for the latest on new releases.





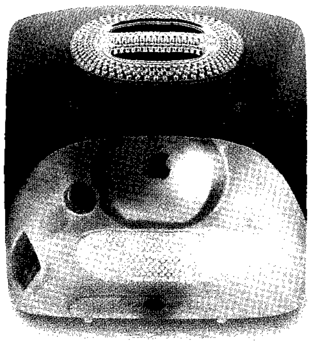
What could be more amazing than surfing the Internet? How about surfing the Internet without any wires tethering you to the phone line?

Welcome to Apple's new AirPort™ wireless networking.

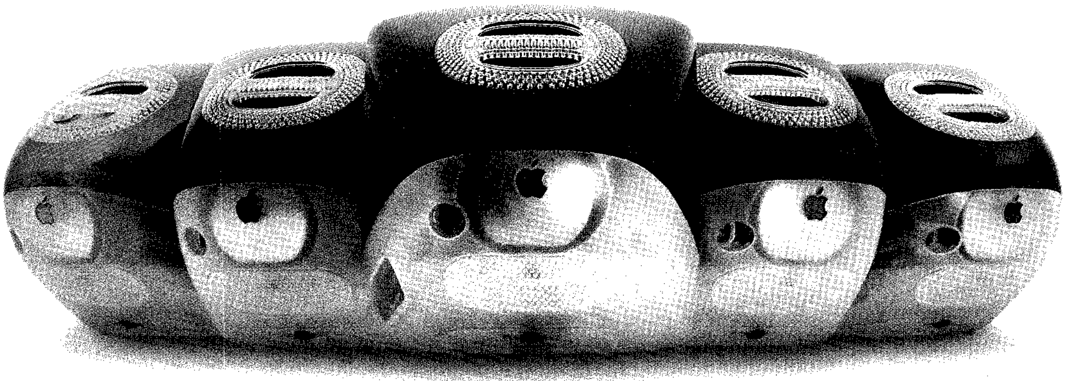
All you have to do is plug the AirPort Base Station into your phone line, cable modem, DSL modem or Ethernet network. Then slip an AirPort card into your iMac and you're cleared for takeoff.

Up to ten iMacs (or iBooks) can share a single AirPort Base Station to connect to the Internet, and can

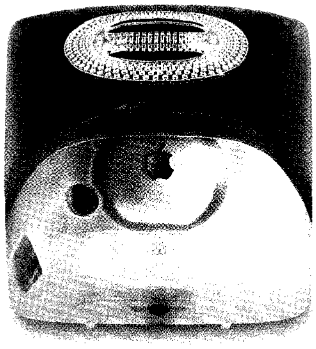
Multiple choice.
(Any answer is correct.)



iMac: $999.* *350MHz G3 processor, 64MB memory, 56K modem,** 6GB disk storage, slot-loading CD-ROM drive, Harman Kardon stereo micro-speakers, dual USB ports, 10/100Mbps Ethernet. Includes AppleWorks,* Internet Explorer, 3D games and more. Color: Blueberry.*



iMac DV: $1299.* *All the features of iMac, plus: 400MHz G3 processor, slot-loading DVD drive, 10GB disk storage, dual 400Mbps FireWire ports, iMovie video editing software. Colors: Tangerine, Strawberry, Blueberry, Grape, Lime.*



iMac DV
Special Edition:
$1499.*

All the features of iMac DV, plus: 128MB memory and 13GB disk storage. Color: Graphite.

Think different.™

*Suggested retail price. **Actual modem speeds lower. © 1999 Apple Computer, Inc. All rights reserved. Apple, the Apple logo, AppleWorks, FireWire, the FireWire logo and QuickTime are registered trademarks and AirPort, iBook, iMac, iMovie and Think different are trademarks of Apple Computer, Inc. ©Disney/Pixar. L04476A

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

electric bassist **STEVE SWALLOW**; the refined lyricism won't be disturbed a bit when saxophonist **JOE LOVANO** slips in to replace Swallow over the weekend. In its own quiet way, this is one of the year's most adventurous bookings for a mainstream jazz club. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL**.

JAZZ STANDARD, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through Oct. 31: The Los Angeles jazz scene of the bop and hard-bop era has been getting a lot of attention lately, both in print and in reissued recordings. But this chance to hear two authentic West Coast veterans—tenor saxophonist **HAROLD LAND** and drummer **BILLY HIGGINS**—is the best way to assess the L.A. legacy. Higgins, fully recovered from a recent serious illness, is among the most accomplished drummers alive. Land is a brainy hard-bopper with a sure, sculpted sound whose credentials stretch back to a celebrated stint with Clifford Brown and Max Roach in the early fifties. He and Higgins have known each other for just as long; this encounter should not be missed. Dining.

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Oct. 29-31: **DAVE DOUGLAS** scales down group size but not ambition with his Tiny Bell Trio. Tossing about new-jazz, Balkan, and classical motifs, trumpeter Douglas, drummer **JIM BLACK**, and guitarist **BRAD SHEPIK** have developed a musical language all their own. Oct. 30: Vocalist **CECILIA ENGELHART** performs with the Panamanian bassist **SANTI DIBRIANO**.

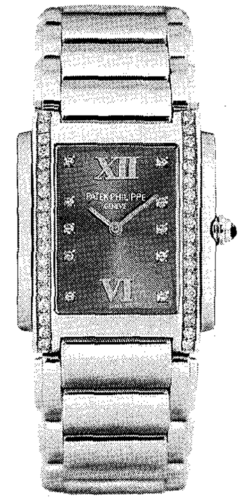
SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through Oct. 31: The **JAMES HURT** quartet. "Dark Grooves Mystical Rhythms," this daring young pianist's recent début recording, attempts far too much and may not be the best introduction to his work. In performance, though, Hurt's talent and focus come to the fore. Dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Oct. 31: A whole new generation of bright young pianists—Jacky Terrasson, James Hurt, and Renee Rosnes among them—still haven't stolen any of **GERRI ALLEN'S** thunder. Her telepathic trio, with bassist **BILLY JOHNSON** and drummer **MARK JOHNSON**, allows Allen to cut a brazen swath through nearly a century of jazz-piano idioms, while buffing them to a modernist sheen. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Portraits by Ingres: Image of an Epoch." Beginning with a gravely pompous image of the Emperor Napoléon (looking disquietingly like the current Mayor of New York), this show surveys the superb French draftsman's greatest works. Ingres himself wouldn't have been happy with it, since he hoped to be remembered principally for his insipid mythological tableaux. With those more troublesome works excluded, however, his genius shines. The small drawn likenesses are passionately, even miraculously articulate, and their psychological acuity rivals Rembrandt's. Ingres was, one is tempted to say, the reason God invented graphite. In the painted portraits, he polished his aristocratic models to an unearthly, Apollonian sheen. The artist who famously denigrated the importance of color was also the finest colorist of his age. The catalogue is an excellent accompaniment to this exceptional show, in part because it documents the fascinating subsequent histories of Ingres's sitters. Through Jan. 2. . . . ¶ "Carleton Watkins: The Art of Perception" presents more than a hundred and twenty-five images by this pioneer of photography, who recorded the vastness of the American West. Through Jan. 9. . . . ¶ "Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids," a sombre and ravishing survey of five hundred



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MUSIC THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

A gorgeous collector's deluxe edition of a decade of revolutionary recordings by original synth Wendy Carlos. Hear the actual master tapes for the first time, painstakingly transferred, cleaned and optimized, using ultra-high fidelity 20-bit "Hi-D" sound.

"Carlos's realization of the Fourth Brandenburg Concerto is, to put it bluntly, the finest performance of any of the Brandenburgs—live, canned, or intuited—I've ever heard."
—Glenn Gould

Collect the Grammy-award family of ***Switched-On Bach***, which propelled the synthesizer to fame in 1968 and became the first Platinum-selling classical album, with ***The Well-Tempered Synthesizer***, ***Switched-On Bach II***, and the ***Switched-On Brandenburgs***.

WENDY CARLOS ◆ SWITCHED-ON BOXED SET

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- Behind the S-OB scenes
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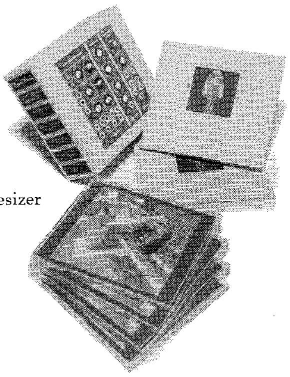
- More images and texts for your computer
- A working analog synth computer program
- MIDI files of Carlos's Bach performances



Other Wendy Carlos titles on ESD:
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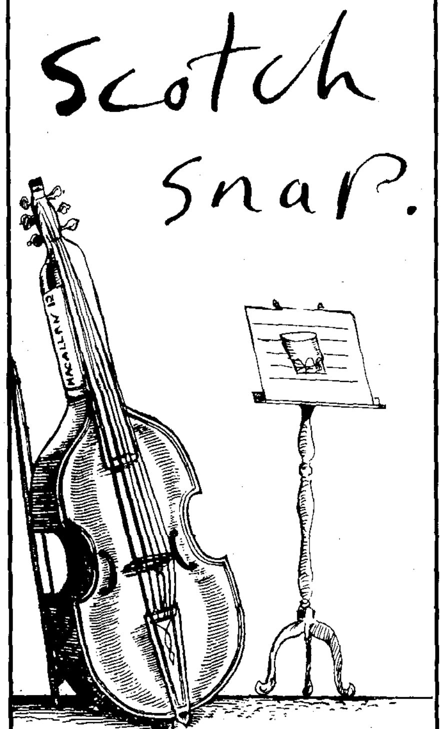


A manuscript from a Conservatoire of Music

Sirs, it may have come to your notice that in music we have a term '*Scotch Snap*'. This usually takes the form of a semiquaver followed by a dotted quaver, a device favoured particularly by baroque composers such as Handel giving a distinctive 'jerky' character to a dance tune.

It has been suggested in the Professors' Common Room that this figure derived its name from the rough liquors of the time which imparted *a sudden jolt to the Scottish tastebuds.*

Today, of course, we have The Macallan Single Highland Malt Whisky, which provides such a delectable legato that the *Scotch* snap has become quite forgotten – except of course in those bars where only baser spirits are jiggered out (in which case, may we suggest a *bar's rest?*).

Yours etc., Ian Curror,
FRCO (CHM), GRSM, ARCM, LRAM *and BAR.*

THE MACALLAN.
THE MALT.

THE MACALLAN® Scotch Whisky. 43% alc./vol.
Sole U.S. importer Rémy Amérique, Inc., New York, N.Y.
© 1999 The Macallan Distillers Ltd.

years of the millennia of Egyptian dynasties, covers the Old Kingdom (2650-2150 B.C.), the glorious formative period of Pharaonic art when the great pyramids were built and religious statuary rose to a refined naturalism. Through Jan. 9. . . . ¶ "Daido Moriyama: Hunter," an exhibition of forty photographs made in postwar Japan. Through Jan. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—The museum has begun unfurling its three-part blockbuster, "MOMA 2000," with "Modern Starts," which samples art from 1880 to 1920. Even this curatorial division is subdivided: "People," installed on the second floor, focusses on figurative work by Matisse, Picasso, Redon, Munch, Léger, and other colossi of early modernism. Neighboring floors will house "Places" (which opens Oct. 28) and "Things" (Nov. 21). (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

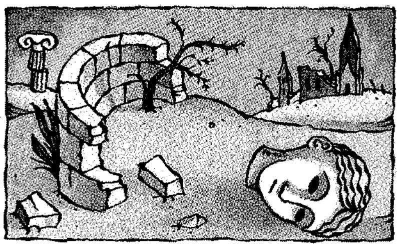
Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—Francesco Clemente, who first came to international prominence at the 1980 Venice Biennale, rose quickly in an art world bone-tired of Conceptualism's stranglehold on the scene. This was largely owing to his refreshing lack of didacticism, his unabashed use of the painted figure, his old-fashioned artisanal materials, and his energetically romantic imagery. After a move to New York in the eighties, his name was indissolubly linked with the era's other neo-expressionist art stars, from Basquiat to Schnabel. The Guggenheim's museum-wide retrospective (Clemente is the youngest artist to get one) unites more than two hundred works in various mediums in an effort to enshrine a polymorphous oeuvre that is light and sweet, and, at times, overripe and cloying. The curators, "in keeping with the artist's anti-hierarchical, open-ended spirit," have emphasized eclecticism (a wag once called Clemente "a chameleon in a state of grace"). But as you ascend the nautilus, and the oils, watercolors, pastels, frescoes, sculptures, and book prints begin to mount up, it's easy to see Clemente's hasty eclecticism solidifying into habit. Through Jan. 9. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Part two of "The American Century" is a vast improvement over its predecessor, and not just because American art gathered momentum after the Second World War. The exhibition design as a whole is clearer: film clips and "historical" displays have been segregated to small side rooms, so they don't compete directly with the nearly seven hundred art works. On the upper floors, curator Lisa Phillips succeeds in making a familiar story feel almost fresh. The Abstract Expressionist gallery is a pleasure, and the appearance of a Chuck Close portrait in a room devoted to Minimalism seems smartly provocative. Only in the later rooms do the skewed priorities and omissions begin to appear. From this show you could learn a lot about television sitcoms of the seventies, but you would never know, for example, that the decade witnessed a major revival of representational painting. The exhibition ends with a whimper: can the nineties really have been as sterile a decade as it seems here? Don't believe it. Through Feb. 13. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection." Refreshed by controversy, this sampling of advertising mogul Charles Saatchi's private collection looks energetic and diverse. Most of the forty artists project a jaunty cynicism, aiming for a quick, marketable impact, but only a handful of the works are truly impressive. "Ghost," Rachel Whiteread's plaster cast of the inside of a living room, is the sombre high point of the exhibition. Jenny Saville's gloriously obese painted self-portraits and Ron Mueck's leaner

BOOK CURRENTS

Wrecked



At Sir John Soane's Museum in London last summer, a curious exhibition of watercolors, oils, and architectural designs examined the cult of the ruin that swept Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The show's catalogue, **Visions of Ruin** (Soane Gallery), includes an essay by the art historian David Watkin, which points out that ruins—whether real or fake, Pompeii or garden folly—encourage "stimulating reflections in the sensitive and educated viewer." Here, alongside probing commentaries on the meaning and pleasures of decay, are ruins that crumble across the page in images by Piranesi, Clérisseau, and the architect Soane himself, who, in 1798, envisioned his glorious Bank of England as a future shambles.

Only the Bank of England's façade still stands, and many other buildings from Soane's day have endured the same fate, as evidenced by **In Ruins: The Once Great Houses of Ireland** (Bulfinch), a book of photographs by Simon Marsden with text by Duncan McLaren. Marsden's ghostly images depict Gothic and Palladian estates as they inch toward oblivion, undone by civil wars, famine, and damp. Whimsical obelisks, such as Conolly's Folly at Castletown House, show that even artificial ruins can benefit, aesthetically, from neglect. The kind of ruins that inspired these follies abound in **Mediterranean** (Aperture), a hymn to desolation by the Neapolitan photographer Mimmo Jodice. In Jodice's work, the empty amphitheatre at Pozzuoli and other ancient sites are raked by spectral light and shadow while antique bronze faces stare disconcertingly across time.

Closer to home, Camilo José Vergara, a sociologist and photographer, documents the premature dereliction of the United States in **American Ruins** (Monacelli Press). Exploring inner cities, Vergara finds Beaux Arts courthouses, Rust Belt factories, and housing projects being abandoned at an unbridled rate. Entire neighborhoods, such as Detroit's once fashionable Brush Park, have become exhibits in an imagined "Smithsonian of Decline," leaving Vergara, like a modern Soane or Piranesi, to ponder contemporary ruin with "a combined sense of respect, loss, and admiration for its peculiar beauty."

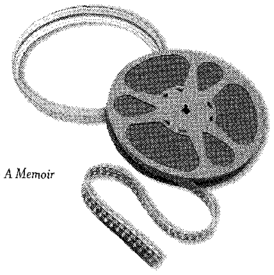
SERGIO RUZZIER

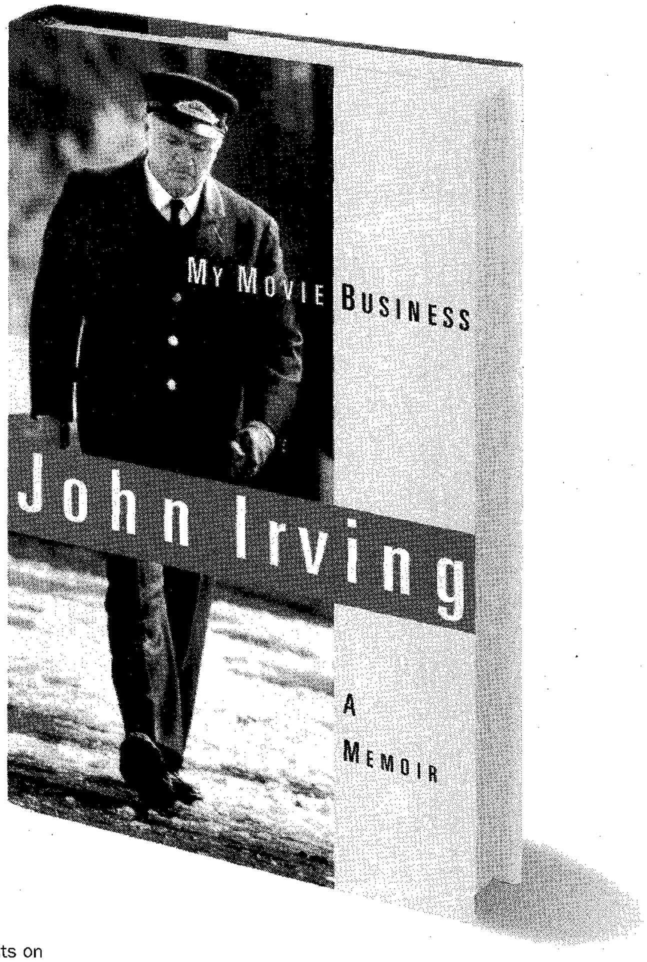
Books.

[AT BARNES & NOBLE]

"There is less time for character development in a film than in a novel; a character's eccentricities can too easily *become* the character."

—Excerpt from *My Movie Business: A Memoir*





MY MOVIE BUSINESS: A MEMOIR

by John Irving

John Irving's new memoir blends family history and thoughts on writing with a behind-the-scenes look at the business of turning books into movies. Beginning with an homage to his grandfather—a physician whose life and career were the inspiration for *The Cider House Rules*—Irving goes on to discuss his work as both novelist and screenwriter. He also examines the unpredictability of the movie business and his reactions to the films *The World According to Garp, The Hotel New Hampshire*, and, most notably, the new Miramax release of the film adaptation of *Cider House* starring Michael Caine.
(Random House)

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sculptural ones are exceptional in part for their relatively traditional (keep it quiet) virtuosity. And then there's Damien Hirst, whose dead animals in tanks seem almost quaintly existentialist. In the offensiveness department, Chris Ofili's "Holy Virgin Mary" is by no means the leading contender. Indeed, Ofili's tepid, psychedelic works are some of the most inert in the show; it's a pity the current battle couldn't have been waged over a more impressive work of art. Through Jan. 9. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Museum for African Art, 593 Broadway (966-1313)—"Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa" brings together sixty-five works (paintings, photographs, sculptures, installations, and videos) by thirteen artists. The exhibition only briefly notes the art of resistance, then moves on to work made in the past five years, during Mandela's Presidency. Sue Williamson uses photographs of accusers, defenders, and transcripts from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to produce enigmatic images of the country's post-apartheid drama. "Guilt and Innocence," Brett Murray's poignant installation of boyhood snapshots of his family and their black servants, was originally installed in the prison where Mandela spent twenty-six years. Mbongeni Richman Buthelezi makes collages using plastic garbage, a material so ubiquitous in his native region it is called "the lily of the Cape." Through Jan. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5:30; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 6.)

New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. (873-3400)—"Masterworks of 19th-Century American Painting" presents a rich representation of national taste in the decades prior to the Gilded Age, when the Society was the city's leading art institution. In an elegant, newly refurbished hall, portraits, landscapes, battle scenes, and allegorical pictures hang in the period's popular all-over salon style. Among the gems on view are Frederic Edwin Church's "Cayambe," a lush equatorial landscape complete with pre-Columbian ruins and a snow-capped volcano, and Albert Bierstadt's "Autumn Woods," a brilliant if restrained study of crisply colored fall. Other seminal artists included in this permanent installation are Thomas Cole, Rembrandt Peale, William Sidney Mount, John Trumbull, and Asher B. Durand. . . . ¶ "$24: The Legendary Deal for Manhattan" investigates the infamous purchase of the island in 1626 by the Dutch from Lenape inhabitants for goods valued at an estimated sixty guilders—twenty-four dollars to the rest of us. Featuring historic prints, maps, wampum, and appropriately grandiloquent artist's representations of the deal, the exhibition searches for the truth behind the legend. Through March 9. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

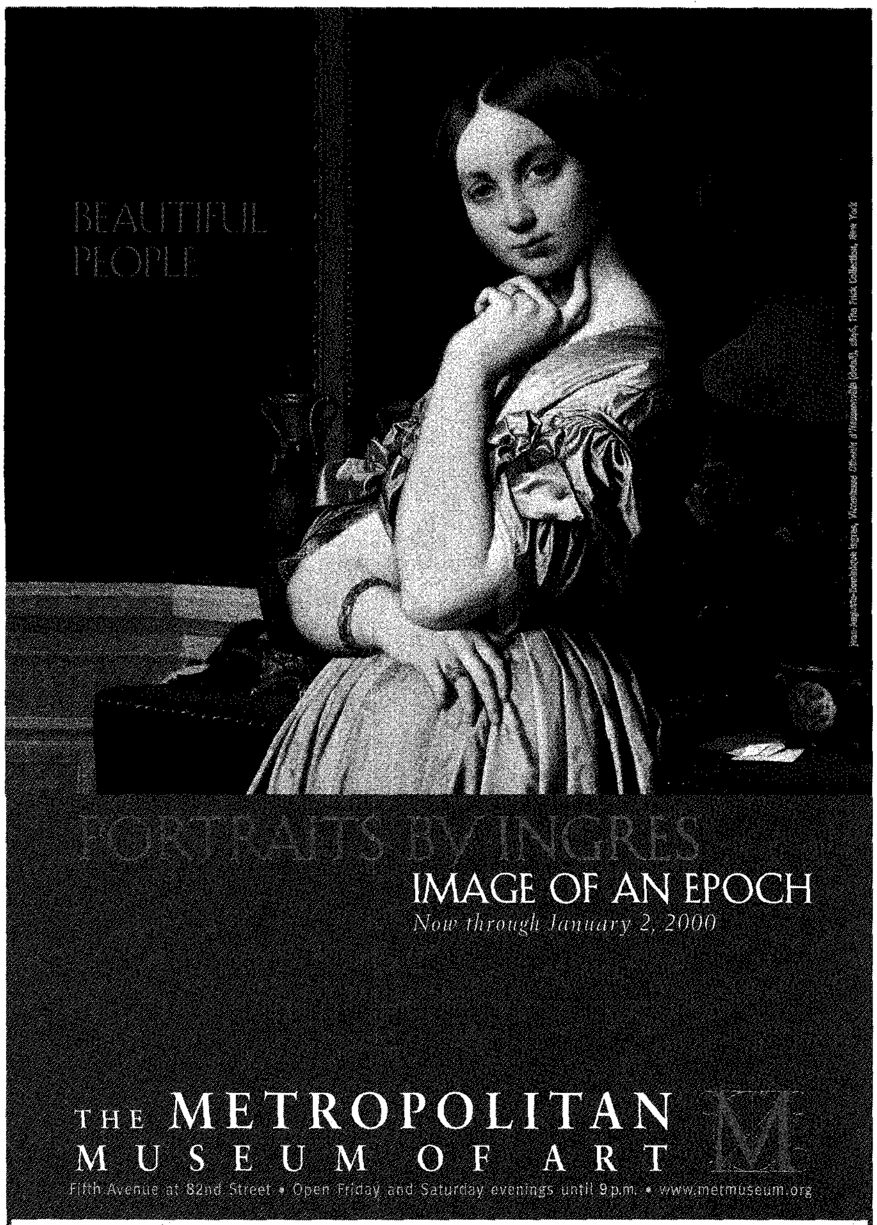
Ruth Marten—Paintings of the sort of hair styles you might get if barbers and beauticians lived in the same relation to reality as artists do. Marten's concoctions pile style upon style—dreads, bobs, braids, layered looks, naturals, pig- and ponytails—into decadent hair assemblages that make Marie Antoinette's little updo look tame. Through Nov. 6. (Littlejohn, 41 E. 57th St. 980-2323.)

Susana Solano—Four large sculptures and three drawings from this post-minimal Spaniard with a soft touch for hard-hat materials. In "Circulo: Casus Belli II," Solano presents a "Spiral Jetty"-like construction made of galvanized chain-link fencing wrapped around a large piece of tempered glass shaped like a cashew. Another sculpture, "Lilà," features a ten-foot circle of metallic mesh folded into soft ribbons atop an iron platform. Solano's sculptures favor quiet epiphanies arrived at through the juxtapositions of clunky stuff. Her drawings, which also investigate questions of balance and transparency, are clearly secondary in importance and effort. Through Nov. 6. (McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 688-5951.)

Saul Steinberg (1914-99)—Steinberg's American career began in 1941, when *The New Yorker* accepted not only his first unsolicited submission but also the accompanying request for help in obtaining a visa. Steinberg worked for the magazine for the next fifty-eight years, until his death last May. At their best, his caricatures of real and imaginary landscapes gave shape to familiar but unarticulated thoughts. The works here, in pen, ink, watercolor, paper bag, and wood, are dominated by a variation on his famous myopic cosmology of Manhattan: the view this time looks east across Long Island, the Atlantic, Europe, Asia, and America to the West Side and—at the horizon—Central Park. Through Nov. 1. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292.)

Trevor Winkfield—Two exhibitions—recent still-life paintings uptown and a retrospective of drawings in Chelsea—by this puzzling and delightful English-born painter. Winkfield's idiom might be called heraldic modernism; it's a stylized pictographic dialect, halfway between the arcane symbolism of the tarot deck and the jaunty immediacy of Stuart Davis. In bright flat color, he composes tottering assemblages of crisp icons—fish, tassels, sheaves of wheat, flowers, and ice-cream cones. If the paintings can sometimes seem hermetic, they are also utterly distinctive: there's no one like Winkfield. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050; Levy, 453 W. 17th St., 646-486-1607. Both shows through Nov. 13.)

Short List—**lee bontecou,** Castelli, 59 E. 79th St. 249-4470. Through Nov. 24. . . . **michael david,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550. Through Nov. 6. . . . **alex katz,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Open Mondays; through Nov. 6. . . . **paul manes,** Kouros, 23 E. 73rd St. 288-5888. Through Nov. 13. . . .



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DAVID MANN, Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 535-5767. Through Nov. 13. . . . **RICHARD PATTERSON,** Cohan, 41 W. 57th St. 755-7171. Through Nov. 27. . . . **JOHN WONNACOTT,** Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810. Through Nov. 20.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

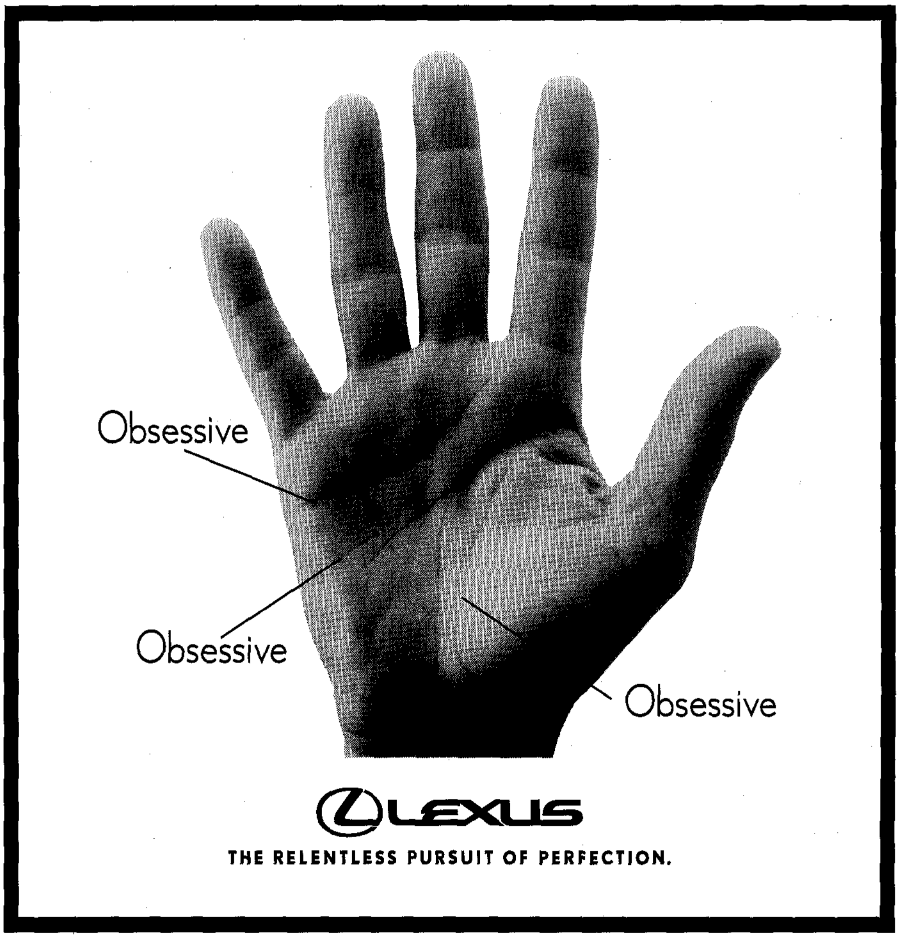
GARY HILL—This show's straightforward title ("A name, a kind of chamber, two weapons, and a still life") belies the complexity and intermittent opacity of the five video works on display. Four of them continue Hill's exploration of the human body and the relationship between image and language. A fifth, "Still Life," extends Hill's visual vocabulary, incorporating computer-generated imagery: in a darkened room that's a technophile's dream, an array of screens and monitors display ghostly black-and-white images of more than a thousand commonplace objects, including the kitchen sink. The result is both banal and mesmerizing. Upstairs, in the deadpan "Crossbow," the artist turns cyborg, strapping cameras to each arm and capturing his doings at a desk while he writes phrases like "left-write" and "from-morf" and blows on a whistle made of bundled pencils. Draw your own conclusions. Through Oct. 30. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 206-9300.)

SOL LEWITT—In 1968, LeWitt executed his first wall drawing at Paula Cooper's SoHo gallery. Thirty-one years later, he inaugurates the gallery's second Chelsea space with a flamboyant new series that covers the four walls of the handsome, skylit room. The palette of LeWitt's latest wall drawings is a far cry from his original pencilled Minimalism. The latex house paints here seem to come straight out of a Crayola box: purple, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red. Broad stripes, concentric circles, a chevron, and a yin-yangy shape worthy of Dr. Seuss are among the riot of forms vying for attention. Image associations—from Frank Stella to the Finnish textiles of Marimekko—zing around like balls in a pachinko game. Through Dec. 4. (521 W. 21st St. 255-1105.)

MARK LOMBARDI—"Vicious Circles," constellationlike diagrams of international financial scandals, including doozies involving the World Finance Corporation, Palmer National Bank, Iran-Contra, and the Lippo Group. Made up of exquisitely rendered and well-researched connections, Lombardi's dotted lines (signifying the flow of money), solid black lines (business relationships), red lines (final acts such as criminal convictions), and text are impressively clean and crisp. Get a little bit closer and the outlines of a world of hidden connections and agendas come to life with paranoid precision. Six degrees of graft separate the rich and powerful, according to Lombardi's meticulous tracing hand. Through Nov. 13. (Deven Golden, 529 W. 20th St. 414-8456.)

ELLIOTT PUCKETTE—Puckette painstakingly incises filigrees of line into inked-and-gessoed panels, producing decorative paintings that flirt with the conventions of drawing. Her style has always had a wispy, charming quality, but in this show, the first at Paul Kasmin's new Chelsea digs, the calligraphic marks are less baroque and more minimal, and the results feel downright anemic. One exception is the soigné "Plum Blossom," whose curlicues swoop against a lush, dark ground with all the madcap glamour of an Ernst Lubitsch movie. Through Nov. 6. (293 Tenth Ave., at 27th St. 563-4474.)

SHORT LIST—**BILL BARMINSKI,** Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through Nov. 20. . . . **LYNDA BENGLIS,** Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. Through Nov. 13. . . . **JUMBO BLACHLY,** Harris, 529 W. 20th St. 463-9666. Through Nov. 13. . . . **JOHN CURRIN,** Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000. Through Nov. 27. . . . **LEWIS DE SOTO,** Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. 741-3318. Through Nov. 13. . . . **CARROLL DUNHAM,** Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100. Through Dec. 4. . . . **PHIL FROST,** Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 645-1701. Through Nov. 13. . . .



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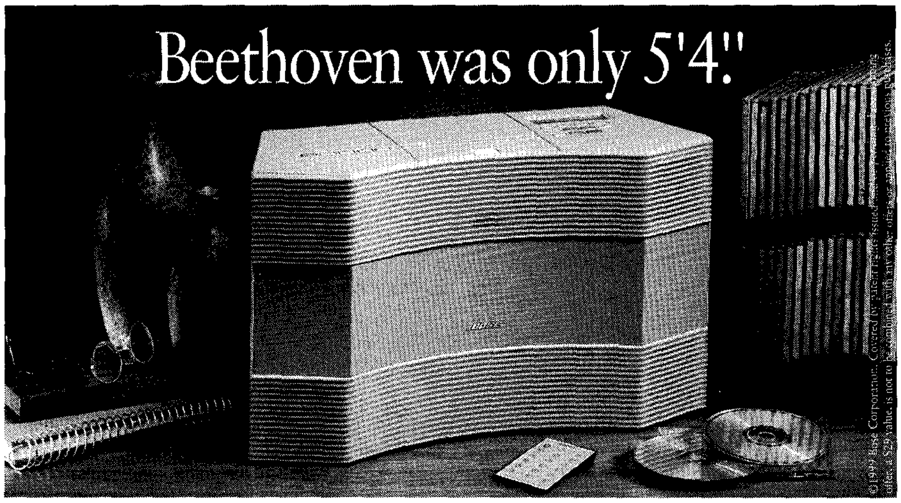

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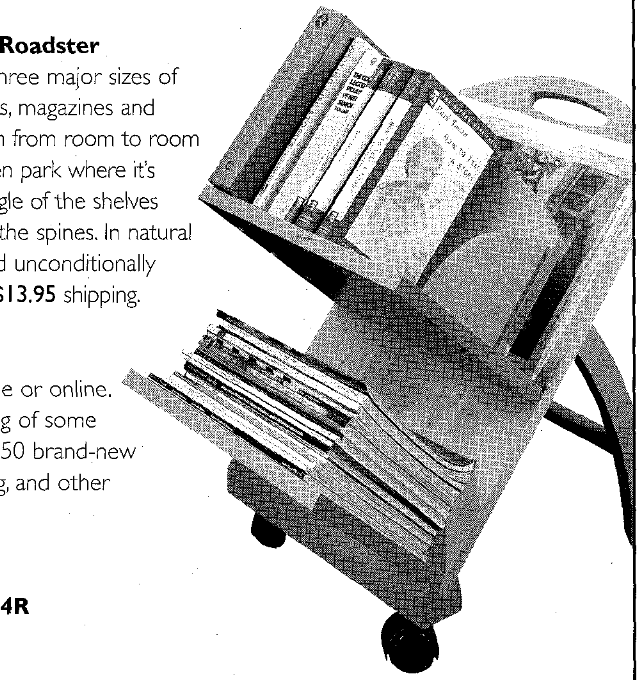

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Rodney Graham, Burgin, 243 W. 18th St. 462-2668. Through Nov. 30. . . . **Mona Hatoum**, Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 367-7474. Through Dec. 4. . . . **Nicky Hoberman** and **Chantal Joffe**, Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500. Both shows through Nov. 27. . . . **Frank Holliday**, Debs, 529 W. 20th St. 647-7080. Through Nov. 13. . . . **Jacqueline Humphries**, Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770. Through Nov. 27. . . . **Christina Mackie**, AC Project Room, 453 W. 17th St. 645-4970. Through Nov. 24. . . . **Carlos Molura**, Ten in One, 526 W. 26th St. 604-9660. Through Nov. 6. . . . **David Reed**, Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999. Through Nov. 27. . . . **Bob Stanley**, Conde, 529 W. 20th St. 691-9866. Through Nov. 13.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Brad Kahlhamer—"Friendly Frontier," an exhibition of paintings that conjure up anarchic Western landscapes. Splashed with stains of watery paint, the canvases look disappointingly casual until the drawings within them catch your eye. In a deft, meandering line, Kahlhamer has rendered weasels, javelinas, tottering towers of amplifiers, and floating flocks of queasy yellow smiley faces (not to mention a human cast of Native American characters that includes the artist himself). These sprawl from image to image and spill out into the gallery itself, where an installation of kachinalike dolls and birds occupies one wall. A messy, raw, exuberant show. Through Nov. 6. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.)

Jenny Saville—"Territories," an exhibit of massive paintings of massive women, by one of the genuine stars of the "Sensation" show. Taking her cue from Lucian Freud, Saville treats corpulence with virtuoso fascination. And yet, despite their dramatic scale and painterly assurance, her latest paintings exude as much youthful uncertainty as daring. Several flirt tentatively with photo-collage effects. "Matrix" depicts a woman in an aggressively pornographic pose—but there's no telling whether Saville intends this lurid, mammoth closeup as an assertive feminist icon or an exercise in aversion therapy. "Fulcrum," the show's highlight, is a grotesque Mont Saint-Victoire of flesh, composed of three expansive nude women strapped together on a table. What are they doing there? Saville seems to be betting that the sheer spectacle will win us over, and it does. Through Dec. 18. (Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828.)

Nicola Tyson—Paintings and drawings by a brash English artist who's not part of the "Sensation" crowd. In "Self-Portrait: Sphinx," Tyson confronts us as a fierce and scrawny homuncula, with budding wings and prominent genitalia. "Opening," a spidery biomorph floating in a blue blankness, is about as tenderly feminine as this artist gets. Sexual ambivalence may be her subject, but it's Tyson's crimped, decisive draftsmanship, distantly recalling that of Egon Schiele, that gives these odd images their staying power. Through Nov. 13. (Petzel, 26 Wooster St. 334-9466.)

Darren Waterston—Insidiously handsome paintings in which dreamy, swampy motifs drift across fields of monochromatic color. The images themselves—reeds and rushes, pagodas, flocks of swallows, and pairs of priapic satyrs—appear as silhouettes, painted with a lovely, inky, delicacy. The effect would be more genuinely seductive if Waterston's sources (Ross Bleckner and Kara Walker) weren't so obvious. Through Nov. 13. (Cowles, 74 Grand St. 925-3500.)

Short List—**Richard Artschwager**, Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753. Through Dec. 18. . . . **Beth B**, Visionaire, 11 Mercer St. 274-8959. Through Nov. 13. . . . **Robert Barry**, Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St. 941-5777. Through Nov. 6. . . . **Jean-Michel Basquiat**, Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. 274-9300. Through Nov. 13. . . . **Betsy Bauer**, Bridgewater/Lustberg & Blumenfeld, 560 Broadway. 941-6355. Through Nov. 23. . . . **Francesco Clemente**, Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441. Through

Nov. 6. . . . **SIMON HENWOOD,** Keenan, 3 Crosby St. 431-5083. Through Nov. 24. . . . **ALFRED JENSEN,** Malca, 580 Broadway. 966-8854. Through Jan. 8. . . . **JERRY KEARNS** and **COR DERA,** P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642. Both shows through Nov. 13. . . . **KIKI LAMERS,** CRG, 93 Grand St. 966-4360. Through Nov. 13. . . . **JONATHAN LASKER,** Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. 431-3685. Through Nov. 6. . . . **HUNG LIU,** Steinbaum Krauss, 132 Greene St. 431-4224. Through Nov. 20. . . . **FERNANDO MOLERO,** Gallery Juno, 568 Broadway. 431-1515. Through Nov. 13. . . . **YOSHITOMO NARA,** Boesky, 51 Greene St. 941-9888. Through Nov. 20. . . . **GINO RUBERT,** Beitzel, 102 Prince St. 219-2863. Through Nov. 14. . . . **MATEJ ANDRAZ VOGRINCIC,** Gibson, 568 Broadway. 925-1192. Through Oct. 30. . . . **HANNAH WILKE,** Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232. Through Nov. 13.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S—Oct. 28: The concluding installment in the sale of the Frank T. Siebert library of books about American history, with this auction focussing on items relating to the westward expansion and to Florida. . . . ¶ Nov. 2: An auction of the exceptional collection of nineteenth-century academic and popular paintings amassed by the proprietors of Haussner's restaurant, in Baltimore, beginning in 1939, and long displayed on the walls of that landmark establishment (which is being converted into a culinary institute). (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S—Oct. 27-28: Celebrity hounds get an opportunity to bid on some fifteen hundred items of personal property from the estate of Marilyn Monroe, including dresses, jewelry (such as the wedding ring Joe DiMaggio gave her in 1954), and her white-lacquered baby grand. . . . ¶ Nov. 1: Nineteenth-century paintings. . . . ¶ Nov. 2-3: Five sessions of print sales. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

SWANN—An auction of books, posters, and ephemera relating to magic. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. Oct. 28.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY—"Propaganda and Dreams: Photographing the 1930s in the USSR and the US." Through Feb. 13. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY MIDTOWN—"Bill Brandt: A Retrospective." Through Oct. 31. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

SHORT LIST—**MICHAEL ACKERMAN,** Bodell, 13 E. 7th St. 477-1820. Open Tuesdays through Sundays, noon to 7; through Nov. 30. . . . **GWEN AKIN AND ALLAN LUDWIG,** Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through Nov. 20. . . . **UTA BARTH,** Bonakdar Jancou, 521 W. 21st St. 925-8035. Through Nov. 24. . . . **OLIVER BOBERG,** Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752. Through Nov. 27. . . . **LUIGI GHIRRI,** Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747. Through Nov. 24. . . . **PAUL HIMMEL** and **ERWIN BLUMENFELD,** Danziger, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 734-5300. Both shows through Nov. 27. . . . **MIMMO JODICE,** Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. 505-5555. Through Nov. 6. . . . **DAVID MALIN,** Schickler, 560 Broadway. 431-6363. Through Nov. 6. . . . **SALLY MANN,** Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070. Through Nov. 6. . . . **DAIDO MORIYAMA** and **REAGAN LOUIE,** Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930. Both shows through Oct. 30. . . . **MARK MORRISROE,** Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. 727-7366. Through Oct. 31. . . . **NICHOLAS NIXON,** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223. Through Nov. 20. . . . **MIGUEL RIO BRANCO,** D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460. Through Nov. 6. . . . **MIKE SMITH** and **MARK STEINMETZ,** Richardson,

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Referee Tony Perez called the fighters to the center of the ring for last-minute instructions. The two men stared at each other. Then Saoul Mamby grinned. "I'm gonna get you, Billy."

Billy Costello said nothing. The fighters returned to their respective corners, and trainer Victor Valle inserted Billy's mouthpiece. "Remember," Victor told him. "Control his jab. He's gonna try to jab and follow with the right hand. Control the jab, and you win."

The bell rang. Billy Costello and Saoul Mamby were alone, one on one. The fight had begun. Moving to ring center, the two men touched gloves. Mamby led with a jab. Billy advanced. Mamby jabbed again, and followed with a straight right—the first real punch of the fight. Mamby with a right-hand lead. Mamby with a double jab. Billy threw a wild left hook, and the challenger ducked under it. Then Billy landed a left hook to the body—his first solid punch. Mamby jabbed, threw a short right behind it, and scored again. The challenger kept jabbing. Billy kept trying to time the jab and land a counter right hand over the top, but the challenger was an elusive target. Billy's counter was falling short. Again Mamby jabbed, and followed with a right. The round was half over. Seconds were moving slowly. Fractions of an inch seemed like miles. Mamby was still jabbing, with the champion continuing to fall just short with his counter right. Then Billy landed a solid left hook to the body, and Mamby moved into a clinch. Twenty-five seconds were left in the round. Billy was the aggressor. A left jab and straight right backed Mamby up. A left hook grazed the jaw of the challenger. Then round one was over. It had been close, with an edge for the champion because he'd been the aggressor. But someone so inclined could have scored it for Mamby.

To read more of this excerpt and to learn about upcoming boxing events, visit **www.hbo.com/boxing.**

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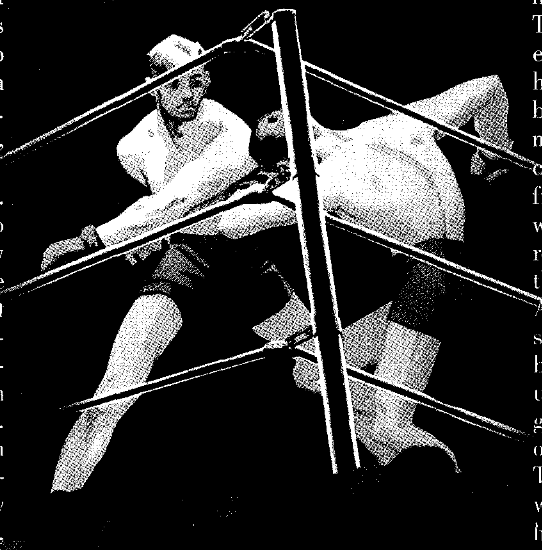


560 Broadway. 343-1255. Both shows through Nov. 20. . . . **WOLS,** Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. Through Nov. 13.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 875-5050; for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall, 247-7800; and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 501-3330.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**TOSCA,** with Elizabeth Holleque, Luciano Pavarotti, and Juan Pons; conducted by Daniel Oren. (Oct. 27 at 8 and Oct. 30 at 8:30.) . . . With Eva Marton, Kristján Jóhansson, and Mr. Pons; Mr. Oren. (Nov. 2 at 8.) . . . A double bill of **CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA,** with Eva Urbanová, Dennis O'Neill, and Paolo Gavanelli, and **PAGLIACCI,** with Emily Pulley, Vladimir Bogachov, Mr. Pons, and Mark Oswald; Carlo Rizzi. (Oct. 28 at 8.) . . . With Fabio Armiliato instead of Mr. O'Neill. (Nov. 1 at 8.) . . . **LE NOZZE DI FIGARO,** with Hei-Kyung Hong, Rebecca Evans, Susan Graham, Dwayne Croft, and Ferruccio Furlanetto; Edo de Waart. (Oct. 29 at 8.) . . . **AIDA,** with Norma Fantini, Olga Borodina, Richard Margison, and Nikolai Putilin; Mr. Rizzi. (Oct. 30 at 1:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

New York City Opera—Oct. 28 at 7:30 and Oct. 30 at 8: "Carmen." . . . ¶ Oct. 29 at 8: "La Bohème." . . . ¶ Oct. 30 at 1:30 and Nov. 2 at 7:30: "Falstaff." . . . ¶ Oct. 31 at 1:30: "The Abduction from the Seraglio," sung in English. (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

"PoulencPlus!"—A festival of centennial events, continuing through Dec. 12. Oct. 27 at 8: L'Opéra Français de New York offers a semi-staged production of Poulenc's monodrama "La Voix Humaine," sung by soprano Jennifer Ringo, on a double bill with Milhaud's "Le Pauvre Matelot" (featuring soprano Constance Hauman, tenor Gordon Gietz, baritone Mel Ulrich, and bass-baritone Jan Opalach). (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448.) . . . ¶ Oct. 30 at 8: A recital of Poulenc songs by winners and finalists from an international vocal competition supported by the Poulenc family. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. For information about tickets, call 866-4096.)

"Houdini the Great"—An opera by Andy Pape, performed in English by Den Anden Opera, a Danish troupe with experimental inclinations. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Oct. 29-30 at 8 and Oct. 31 at 3.)

Amato Opera Company—Opening performances of "Carmen." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Oct. 30 at 7 and Oct. 31 at 2:30. Through Nov. 28.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Colin Davis conducts Haydn's Symphony No. 104 (the "London") and Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 3 (the "Scottish"). (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Oct. 28 and Oct. 30 at 8, Oct. 29 at 11 A.M., and Nov. 2 at 7:30.)

Carl Nielsen International Violin Competition—For the first time in its nineteen-year history, this competition leaves its traditional home in Odense, Denmark, visiting New York as a part of the "Danish Wave" cultural incentive. This week, young violinists from eighteen countries will be moving through three rounds, culminating on Nov. 1 in a celebratory concert. Oct. 27 from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M. and Oct. 28 from 10 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. (with several breaks): Second-round winnowing. (Merkin Concert Hall. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Oct. 29, from 10:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.: The semifinal round of twelve violinists. (Merkin Concert Hall. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Oct. 30 at 8: The three finalists try their hands at the Nielsen Violin Concerto, assisted by the Carl Nielsen Philharmonic of Odense, conducted by Jan Wagner. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Nov. 1 at 7:30: A wrap-up concert featuring the top three prize-winners and the Carl Nielsen Philharmonic of Odense. (Alice Tully Hall.)

St. Louis Symphony—At Carnegie Hall, Hans Vonk conducting. Oct. 28 at 8: Mahler's Symphony No. 3, with mezzo-soprano Nancy Maultsby, the women of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus, and the American Boychoir. . . . ¶ Oct. 29 at 8: Shostakovich's Violin Concerto No. 1 (with Vadim Repin) and Holst's "The Planets."

Manhattan Chamber Sinfonia—James Judd conducts Peter Maxwell Davies's "Carolisima," Brahms's Symphony No. 2, and two pieces featuring violinist Yoo-Kyung Min: Ravel's "Tzigane" and Chausson's "Poème." (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Oct. 29 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

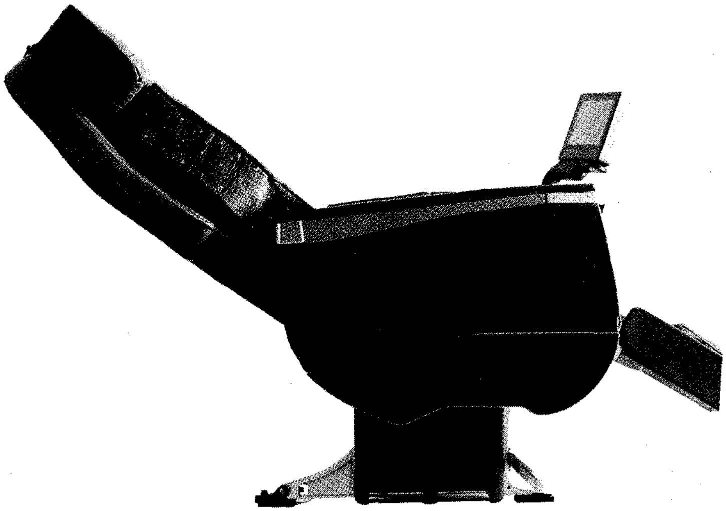
Pomerium—Alexander Blachly leads his early-music choral group in a program of works written to be sung by the Sistine Chapel Choir in the sixteenth century, including pieces by Josquin Des Près, Adrian Willaert, and Jean Mouton. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. Oct. 30 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 279-4200.)

Carl Nielsen Philharmonic of Odense—Jan Wagner conducts Tchaikovsky's rarely heard "Festival Orchestra on the Danish National Anthem," Nielsen's Symphony No. 4 (the "Inextinguishable"), and Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3 (featuring Lilya Zilberstein). (Alice Tully Hall. Oct. 31 at 2.)

American Composers Orchestra—Dennis Russell Davies leads works associated with political protest: Louis Ballard's "Incident at Wounded Knee," Robert Beaser's "The

A detail from "Paris, France, 1999," by Michael Ackerman, at Bodell (see Photography).

Alone at last.



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Heavenly Feast" (featuring soprano Lauren Flanigan), Alvin Singleton's "56 Blows" (inspired by the Rodney King incident), and Curtis Curtis-Smith's "GAS!—The Great American Symphony." (Carnegie Hall. Oct. 31 at 3.)

Jupiter Symphony—Jens Nygaard conducts Meyerbeer's "L'Étoile du Nord" Overture, Wagner's "Wesendonk-Lieder" (with mezzo-soprano Klara Csordas-Witt), Liszt's "Angelus," and Joachim Raff's "Winter" Symphony. (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. Nov. 1 at 2 and 7 and Nov. 2 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)

St. Thomas Choir of Men and Boys—Gerre Hancock directs the choir and the New York Collegium, a period-instrument ensemble, in a program that includes Handel's "Dixit Dominus" and Bach's "Magnificat." (St. Thomas Church, Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. Nov. 2 at 7:30. 664-9360.)

Orpheus Chamber Orchestra—The mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt Lieberson joins the conductorless ensemble for arias from Handel's "Ariodante" and "Theodora," in a concert that also includes instrumental works by Telemann, Bach, and Vivaldi. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 2 at 8.)

RECITALS

Earth Harp—The Winter Garden of the World Financial Center assumes a new look this week with the installation of the Earth Harp, a gigantic instrument whose thirty strings stretch up more than three hundred feet, from the edge of the stage to the barrel-vaulted glass ceiling. Some of the members of the Chicago-based MASS (Movement and Sonic Sculpture) Ensemble create sounds by stroking the strings with their resin-covered hands, while their colleagues accompany on such instruments as Long Bows (twenty-five-foot string instruments), the Drumbella (a giant, spinning drum-sculpture), and wearable harp-garments. Lecture-demonstrations take place on Oct. 27 at 12:15; the official Earth Harp performance première is scheduled for Oct. 28 at 6:30. Only seven pieces have been composed for the Earth Harp so far, but you never know; it could catch on. (Battery Park City. No tickets necessary.)

"Dracula"—A screening of the 1931 film, starring Bela Lugosi, with Philip Glass and the Kronos String Quartet playing Mr. Glass's accompanying score. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Oct. 27 at 7:30.)

Organ Recitals—Two big names are passing through town this week. Oct. 27 at 7:30: **christopher herrick,** the organist of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, plays works by Bach (including the F-Major Toccata and Fugue, BWV 540), Duruflé, Alexandre Guilmant, Mozart (his F-Minor Fantasia), and Edwin Henry Lemare. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. 378-0248.) . . . ¶ Oct. 29 at 8: **marie-claire alain,** the doyenne of French organists, who seems to threaten that each of her American tours will be her last (to the distress of organ aficionados), performs three of Bach's "Schübler" chorales and his Preludes and Fugues in E-Flat Major (BWV 552) and A Minor (BWV 543), Franck's A-Major Fantasia, and works by her father, Albert, and her brother, Jehan. (Church of the Holy Trinity, 316 E. 88th St. 289-4100.)

St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble—Presenting an all-Beethoven program comprising his Septet and a wind-ensemble arrangement of his Symphony No. 7. (Weill Recital Hall. Oct. 27 at 8.)

Jack Gibbons—The pianist offers an all-Gershwin program. (Alice Tully Hall. Oct. 27 at 8.)

"Do Chinese Postmen Ring Twice Too?"—This "sight-and sound tangram," composed in 1963 by Sarah Mandelblut, may provide the answer. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Oct. 27-29 at 8 and Oct. 30 at 3 and 8.)

Bargemusic—Presenting the Orion String Quartet, performing Beethoven's Quartets in E-Flat Major (Op. 74) and B-Flat Major (Op. 130, with the "Grosse Fuge"), as well as a suite from Wynton Marsalis's "At the Octoroon Balls." (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. Oct. 28 at 7:30 and Oct. 31 at 4.)

Göran Söllscher—The Swedish guitarist plays transcriptions of Bach sonatas for solo violin and solo cello, among other works. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. 749-2802, ext. 428. Oct. 28 at 8.)

Jess Trio Vienna—An award-winning piano trio of three siblings from the Jess-Kropfitsch family—pianist Johannes, violinist Elisabeth, and cellist Stefan (with the last two playing on Stradivari instruments)—performs trios by Haydn (in G Major, Hob. XV/25) and Beethoven (the "Archduke"), as well as Johannes's own "Rondeaux Brillantes on Themes by Johann Strauss." (Merkin Concert Hall. Oct. 28 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Renaud Capuçon—The French violinist, assisted by pianist Frank Braley, plays sonatas by Ravel and Strauss, in addition to Schubert's C-Major Fantasia and the première of Thierry Lancino's "Five Caprices." (Weill Recital Hall. Oct. 29 at 8.)

Musicians from Marlboro—Participants in the Vermont music institution perform Dvořák's Terzetto, Schoenberg's String Trio, and Brahms's String Quintet in G Major (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Oct. 29 at 8. . . . ¶ New School Auditorium, 66 W. 12th St. 243-9937. Oct. 31 at 2.)

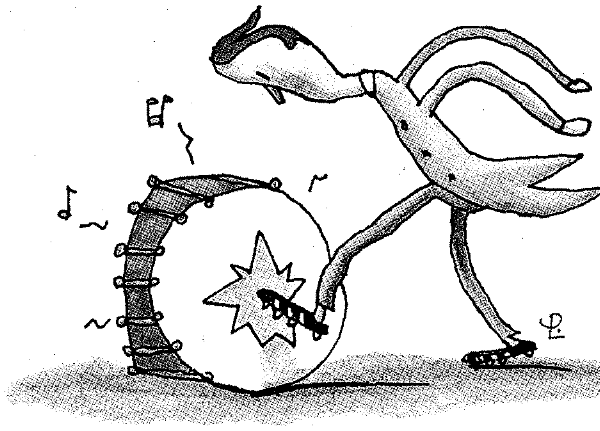
Guarneri Quartet—The foursome performs string quartets by Haydn (in D Major, Op. 20, No. 4), Mendelssohn (in D Major, Op. 44, No. 1), and Brahms (in C Minor, Op. 51, No. 1). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Oct. 30 at 8.)

The Queen's Chamber Band—Presenting harpsichord works and trio sonatas from the French ancien régime. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Oct. 30 at 8. For information about tickets, call 932-9462.)

Hesperus—The early-music trio presents compositions by the twelfth-century mystic Hildegarde von Bingen. (Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park. 650-2290. Oct. 31 at 3.)

Musica Pacifica—In the opening concert of its twenty-fifth season, Music Before 1800 presents this California-based period-instrument quintet, performing sonatas and concerts by such Venetian Baroque composers as Vivaldi, Albinoni, Francesco Maria Veracini, and Marco Uccelini. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. Oct. 31 at 4.)

Mandreling String Quartet—The German foursome offers quartets by Haydn (in D Major, Op. 64, No. 5), Ligeti (his Second), and Beethoven (in C Major, Op. 59, No. 3), in addition to Zemlinsky's "Two Quartet Movements." (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Oct. 31 at 5.)



Margaret Leng Tan—The intrepid pianist offers a seventieth-birthday salute to composer George Crumb (a week and a day after the fact), by performing his entire two-volume cycle "Makrokosmos—Twenty-four Fantasy Pieces for Amplified Piano," composed in 1972-73. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 1 at 8.)

Byron Janis—The pianist performs an all-Chopin program, with Borislav Strulov joining him for the Cello Sonata. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 1 at 8. A benefit concert.)

Concertante Chamber Players—The string ensemble performs Tchaikovsky's "Souvenir de Florence" and Mendelssohn's Octet. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 2 at 8.)

ALSO OF INTEREST

"solo flights": This avant-garde piano festival concludes on Oct. 27 with performances by Tomoko Mukaiyama (at 7) and Jed Distler (at 9). (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.) . . . **zenon fishbein:** Pianist, performing works by Turina, Falla, Albéniz, and Prokofiev. (Hubbard Recital Hall, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Oct. 27 at 8. No tickets necessary.) . . . **artek:** The singers and period-instrument players offer Monteverdi's "Ballo Delle Ingrate." (St. Francis of Assisi Church, 135 W. 31st St. Oct. 28 at 1:15. No tickets necessary.) . . . **new york treble singers:** The women's choir celebrates its fifteenth anniversary with a wide-ranging program. (Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, 7 W. 55th St. Oct. 29 at 7:30. Admission by contribution.) . . . **stony brook contemporary chamber players:** Recent works by women, including Melinda Wagner, Libby Larsen, and Chen Yi. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Oct. 29 at 8. No tickets necessary.) . . . **sundays on the island:** Mozart's Clarinet Quintet and a Haydn string quartet. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. Oct. 31 at noon.) . . . **jennifer rivera:** Mezzo-soprano, with pianist Brian Zeger. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. 734-2130. Oct. 31 at 3.) . . . **trio chalumeau:** A Danish basset-horn trio. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. 734-2130. Oct. 31 at 7.) . . . **"translucence":** A song cycle by Donna McKevitt, set to poems by Derek Jarman. (St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University, enter at Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Nov. 2 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Readings—Oct. 27 at 6:30: By Gregory St. John, of Charles Dickens's stories "Sikes and Nancy" and "Captain Murderer." (Merchant's House Museum, 29 E. 4th St. For reservations, which are required, call 777-1089.) . . . ¶ Oct. 28 at 7: By cookbook author Betty Fussell, from her memoir, "My Kitchen Wars." (The Corner Bookstore, Madison Ave. at 93rd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Oct. 31 at 7:30: By James Morrow, from his novel "The Eternal Footman." (Temple Bar, 332 Lafayette St. No tickets necessary.)

Talks—Oct. 27 at 6: Historian Kurt Moeller Pedersen explains how Gian Domenico Cassini, Olaus Roemer, Isaac Newton, and other scientists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries estimated the size of the universe. (New York Academy of Sciences, 2 E. 63rd St. 838-0230.) . . . ¶ Oct. 28 at 6:30: Barbara Haskell, a curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, talks about the Whitney's exhibition "The American Century." (Doyle, 175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.) . . . ¶ Nov. 2 at 6:30: In conjunction with its exhibit "The Italians of New York," the New-York Historical Society presents a discussion of Italian design, with *Town and Country* editor Pamela Fiori, interior designer Mario Buatta, graphic designers Lella and Massimo Vignelli, former *Mirabella* editor Grace Mirabella, and others. (2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. 873-3400.)

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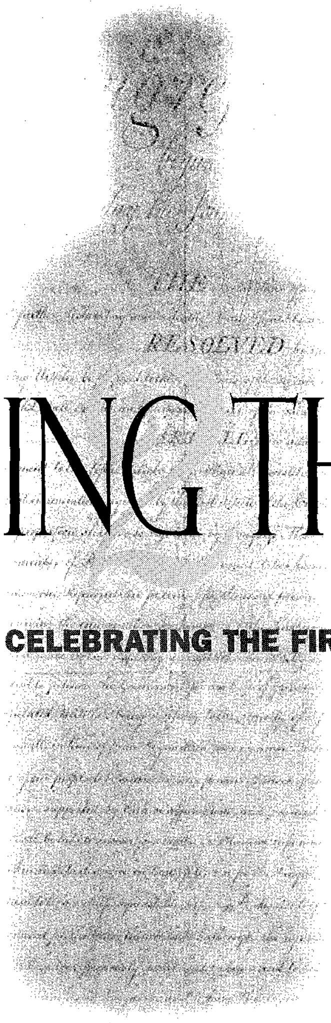

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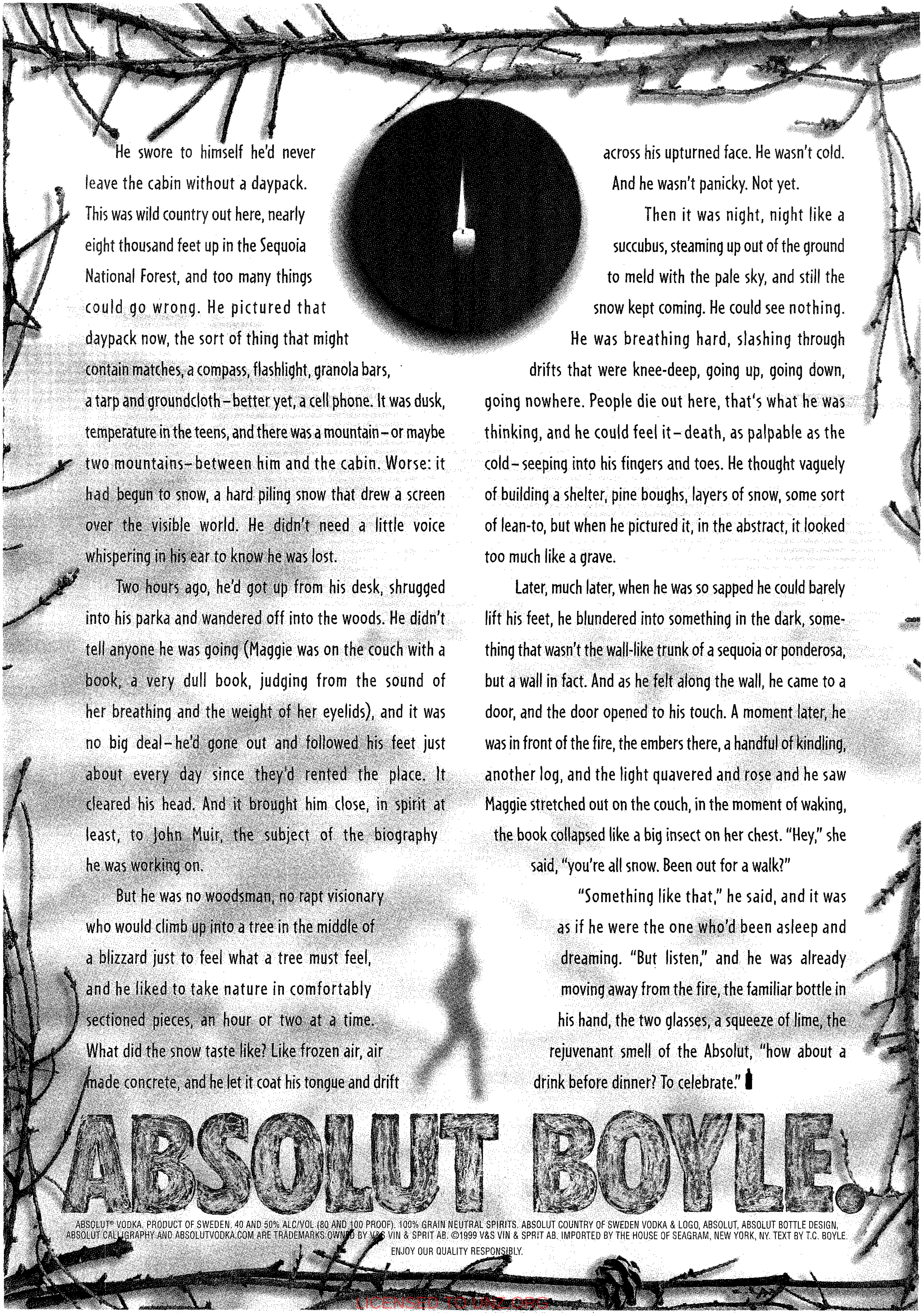
ABSOLUT BOYLE.

He swore to himself he'd never leave the cabin without a daypack. This was wild country out here, nearly eight thousand feet up in the Sequoia National Forest, and too many things could go wrong. He pictured that daypack now, the sort of thing that might contain matches, a compass, flashlight, granola bars, a tarp and groundcloth – better yet, a cell phone. It was dusk, temperature in the teens, and there was a mountain – or maybe two mountains – between him and the cabin. Worse: it had begun to snow, a hard piling snow that drew a screen over the visible world. He didn't need a little voice whispering in his ear to know he was lost.

Two hours ago, he'd got up from his desk, shrugged into his parka and wandered off into the woods. He didn't tell anyone he was going (Maggie was on the couch with a book, a very dull book, judging from the sound of her breathing and the weight of her eyelids), and it was no big deal – he'd gone out and followed his feet just about every day since they'd rented the place. It cleared his head. And it brought him close, in spirit at least, to John Muir, the subject of the biography he was working on.

But he was no woodsman, no rapt visionary who would climb up into a tree in the middle of a blizzard just to feel what a tree must feel, and he liked to take nature in comfortably sectioned pieces, an hour or two at a time. What did the snow taste like? Like frozen air, air made concrete, and he let it coat his tongue and drift across his upturned face. He wasn't cold. And he wasn't panicky. Not yet.

Then it was night, night like a succubus, steaming up out of the ground to meld with the pale sky, and still the snow kept coming. He could see nothing. He was breathing hard, slashing through drifts that were knee-deep, going up, going down, going nowhere. People die out here, that's what he was thinking, and he could feel it – death, as palpable as the cold – seeping into his fingers and toes. He thought vaguely of building a shelter, pine boughs, layers of snow, some sort of lean-to, but when he pictured it, in the abstract, it looked too much like a grave.

Later, much later, when he was so sapped he could barely lift his feet, he blundered into something in the dark, something that wasn't the wall-like trunk of a sequoia or ponderosa, but a wall in fact. And as he felt along the wall, he came to a door, and the door opened to his touch. A moment later, he was in front of the fire, the embers there, a handful of kindling, another log, and the light quavered and rose and he saw Maggie stretched out on the couch, in the moment of waking, the book collapsed like a big insect on her chest. "Hey," she said, "you're all snow. Been out for a walk?"

"Something like that," he said, and it was as if he were the one who'd been asleep and dreaming. "But listen," and he was already moving away from the fire, the familiar bottle in his hand, the two glasses, a squeeze of lime, the rejuvenant smell of the Absolut, "how about a drink before dinner? To celebrate."

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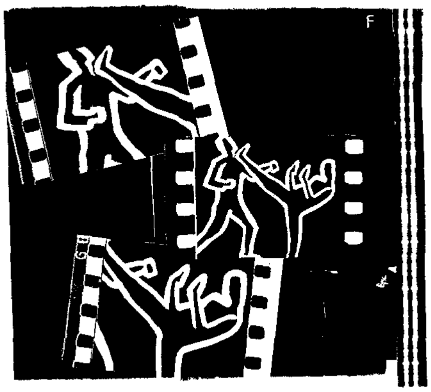


THE MOVIES

OPENING

Being John Malkovich—A comic adventure about a file clerk (John Cusack) who suddenly finds himself inhabiting the consciousness of the actor in question. With Cameron Diaz, Catherine Keener, and Mr. Malkovich. Directed by Spike Jonze. Opening Oct. 29. (Chelsea Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Village East Cinemas.)

Dreaming of Joseph Lees—Eric Styles's romantic psychological thriller features Rupert Graves, Samantha Morton, Lee Ross, and Lauren Richardson. Opening Oct. 29. (Union Square.)

The House on Haunted Hill—A horror film about five strangers, a million-dollar prize, and a haunted psychiatric institute. Directed by William Malone. Opening Oct. 29.

The Legend of 1900—Tim Roth plays a musician named Nineteen Hundred who lives his entire life aboard a ship. Directed by Giuseppe Tornatore. Opening Oct. 29. (Paris and Union Square.)

Man of the Century—A comedy about a modern-day news reporter (Gibson Frazier) who believes he is living in the twenties. Directed by Adam Abraham. Opening Oct. 29. (Angelika Film Center.)

Music of the Heart—The true story of Roberta Guaspari (Meryl Streep), who teaches classical violin to students in East Harlem. Directed by Wes Craven. Opening Oct. 29. (84th Street Six-plex, Gotham Cinemas, and Kips Bay Theatre.)

Princess Mononoke—An animated film by Japanese director Hayao Miyazaki, with the voices of Claire Danes, Billy Crudup, Minnie Driver, and Gillian Anderson. Opening Oct. 29. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

Punitive Damage—A documentary, by Annie Goldson, about the death of a twenty-year-old New Zealander in East Timor in 1991. Opening Oct. 29. (Cinema Village.)

The Suburbans—Donal Lardner Ward co-wrote, directed, and stars in a comedy about a one-hit pop group in the eighties who make a comeback in the nineties. Also with Jennifer Love Hewitt, Will Ferrell, Amy Brenneman, Craig Bierko, and co-writer Tony Guma. Opening Oct. 29. (Lincoln Square and Union Square.)

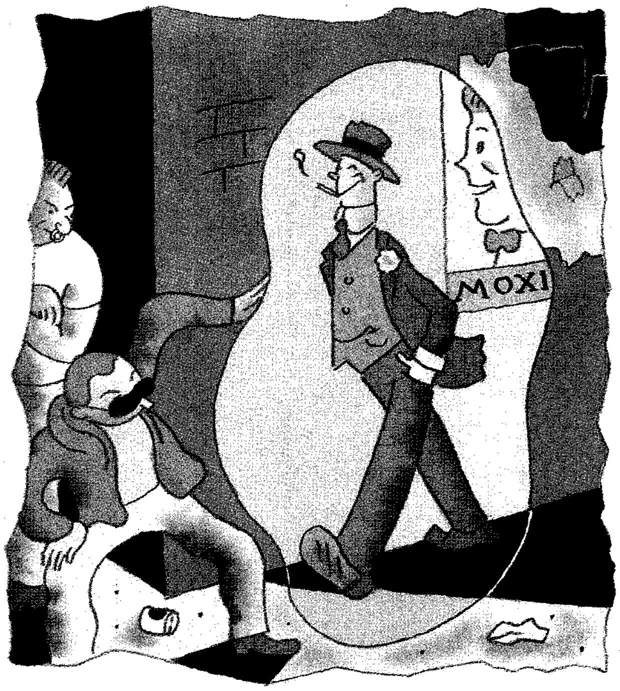
Women—Luis Galvao Teles's film explores the lives of a group of friends, played by Carmen Maura, Miou-Miou, Marisa Berenson, Guesch Patti, and Martha Keller. In French. Opening Oct. 29. (Eastside Playhouse.)

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

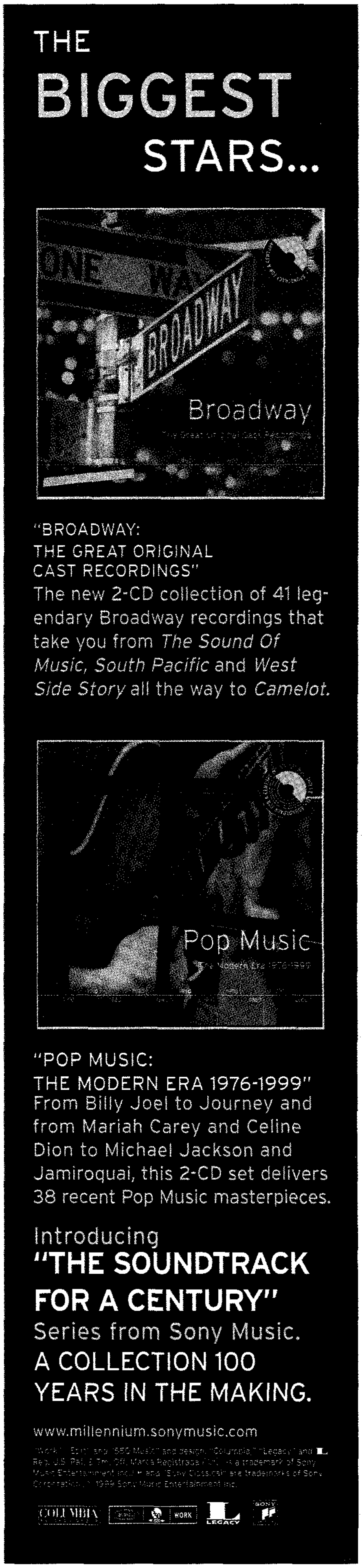
American Beauty—This amazing and impassioned fantasia about American loneliness begins as satire and ends with a vision of the sublime. The defeated suburban patriarch Lester Burnham (Kevin Spacey), condemned by his withdrawn daughter (Thora Birch) and his hyperorganized wife (Annette Bening), drops out of his job and misbehaves badly. After Lester's marriage gets blown apart by squalls of comic contempt, the movie, which was written by Alan Ball and directed by the British theatre maestro Sam Mendes (it's his first film), opens up and takes in Lester's suburban territory—the dissatisfactions of the business-mad nineties, in which the gospel of selfishness leaves people clenched and isolated. The bitter satirical riffs slowly give way to a mystical appreciation of the vagrant beauty trapped beneath the surface of life.—*David Denby* (9/20/99) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Beekman, Kips Bay Theatres, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

Boys Don't Cry—A delicately conceived but fearless movie. In small-town Nebraska, a young woman named Teena Brandon (Hilary Swank) clips her hair into a butch cut, flattens her breasts, puts on boys' clothes and a boy's swagger, and passes in the world as Brandon Teena, handsome young dude. What she feels is pure exhilaration, the excitement of leaving her past behind and becoming a lover; what we feel is dismay and fear. Brandon falls in with a group of derelict, white-trash kids and attracts the languid beauty Lana (Chloë Sevigny), who allows herself to think that Brandon is a man—with inevitably disastrous results. The movie is a fine, terrifying tragic poem that is also, at times, subversively funny: the women who like Brandon seem to want the feminine as well as the masculine in a lover. Director Kimberly Peirce, who wrote the screenplay with Andy Bienen, embraces a full-bodied lyrical real-



Opening Oct. 29, Adam Abraham's "Man of the Century."

MARC ROSENTHAL



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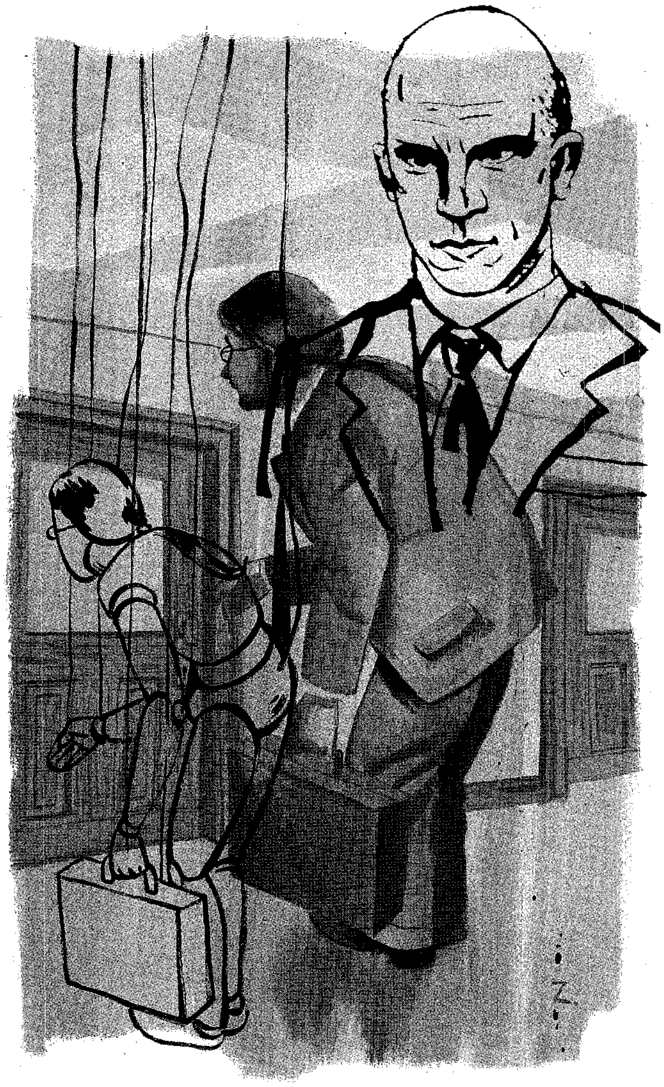
ism in which nothing is exaggerated but nothing is avoided either. With Peter Sarsgaard and Brendan Sexton III as two mangy ex-cons, and Jeannetta Arnette as Lana's boozing mom, who desperately hopes that everything will come out all right. Based on actual events, which were the subject last year of a documentary called "The Brandon Teena Story."—*D.D.* (10/18-25/99) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Union Square.)

Bringing Out the Dead—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Astor Plaza, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)



Opening Oct. 29, Spike Jonze's "Being John Malkovich."

Un Coeur en Hiver (1993)—A tale of love and violins, but don't expect "Intermezzo." Claude Sautet's film, as its title suggests, is not much of a heartwarmer, but its cool look at thwarted passion is enthralling nonetheless. Stéphane (Daniel Auteuil) makes and mends violins; Camille (Emmanuelle Béart) plays them. The two of them shift from distrust to desire to disappointment—in other words, they go through all the motions of love except the making of it. This is so restrained it's shocking; we feel the terrible pressure of all that Stéphane might do with his life and yet refuses to attempt. André Dussollier turns in a quiet performance as Stéphane's business partner and rival in love; add Béart's immaculate poise, and you wonder what strange district of Paris this is, populated largely by emotional cripples. In French.—*Anthony Lane* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Oct. 28.)

Double Jeopardy—This revenge fantasy isn't believable for an instant, but it provides basic emotional satisfactions, and it's become a hit. Ashley Judd gets sent to prison for the murder of her embezzling handsome rotter of a husband, Bruce Greenwood. When she realizes he's still alive—he staged the whole thing and set her up—she becomes a single-minded avenger, a woman without fear. Director Bruce Beresford brings some delicate character touches to the material and enough space for the moods to ripen, though you may catch yourself wishing that Hitchcock could take over and provide a little wit. Tommy Lee Jones is the parole officer who falls in love with Judd's courage.—*D.D.* (Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

Fever Pitch—Nick Hornby's beautiful and desperate book—about the pain behind a soccer fan's true love for the game—is given a pleasant, if somewhat lumpy, cinematic telling by director David Evans. Colin Firth plays a superfan who neglects certain responsibilities in pursuit of his favorite team's championship, and Ruth Gemmell, with a dry wit and warm comic flair, plays his frustrated love interest (she has no love for soccer). The film tries too hard to be both a romantic comedy and an emotional drama about fandom, but it's filled with intelligent observations on the nature of obsession and love.—*Bruce Diones* (Village East Cinemas.)

Fight Club—A grunge rhapsody on fascist, sadomasochistic, and homoerotic themes. Edward Norton's alienated office worker becomes the protégé of Brad Pitt, a happy-go-lucky warrior who vanquishes the inner nerd in other men (in a high point of generosity, he pours acid on Norton's hand). Since the two men enjoy brawling in the street, they open up an organization they call "fight club," in which other alienated men happily beat, gouge, and batter one another. Soon there are fight clubs all over the country and groups of proudly lacerated believers who recognize one another by their purple bruises. The director, David Fincher, attains a mood of sardonic disaffection; the camera is rambunctious and alive, the lighting viciously dark. But this fantasia, for all its skill, is ridiculous and even boring. We're meant to take the male bonding and the blood rituals as a protest against the sterility of corporate life and modern design, but Fincher's sadomasochistic kicks overwhelm any possible social critique. With Helena Bonham Carter, a tiny, pale Expressionist vamp, who sleeps with the two men—a beard, as it were. Written by Jim Uhls, from the novel by Chuck Palahniuk.—*D.D.* (10/18-25/99) (Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia, 62nd & Broadway, and Union Square.)

Happy, Texas—Movies about convicts tend to sweat with desperation, but Mark Illsley's variation on the theme refuses to be shackled to solemnity; it starts out in a mood of high levity and goes on climbing. Steve Zahn and Jeremy Northam (now there's an odd couple for you) play a pair of hapless crooks who find themselves at liberty in the town of the title—a quietly run and easily pleased place where, thanks to a minor misunderstanding, everybody thinks that our heroes are gay beauty-pageant organizers and nobody seems to mind. The movie borrows some of that tolerance for itself, gazing indulgently on the God-fearing schoolteacher (Illeana Douglas) and the mournful sheriff (William H. Macy) as they yield to their respective desires. Illsley allows the plot to breathe while the characters play their comic solos, and they repay his trust; Zahn, especially, seems blissfully adrift in a world of his own stoned imaginings. With Ally Walker as a lovelorn bank manager called Joe—a typically confusing name for a movie where nobody plays it straight.—*A.L.* (10/11/99) (Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Sutton, and Union Square.)

Joe the King—Actor Frank Whaley ("Swimming with Sharks," "The Doors") wrote and directed this personal, unsentimental movie about a young boy (well played by Noah Fleiss) in a dysfunctional family who finds his life spinning out of control; it's easily the best work he's done yet. The movie's not perfect—the built-in poignancy of a poor boy's need to rise above his family's problems is a simple device, and the narrative seems to leave out important details—but there's a low-key richness to Whaley's storytelling that's stirring. The director also brings out some less histrionic performances from actors who have seemed a little damaged lately (Val Kilmer, John Leguizamo). The movie has an odd, shifty tone, and it's all the better for it.—*B.D.* (Union Square.)

The Limey—Steven Soderbergh has proved himself adept at treating American subjects with the careful, sidelong scrutiny of a European eye, and this picture sustains the trend. Terence Stamp plays Wilson, an alarmingly well-preserved British criminal who arrives in Los Angeles to investigate the fate of his late daughter. His inquiries, which feel both bland and underhanded, lead him to Terry Valentine (Peter Fonda), a record producer with a house in the hills and a millionaire's tan. The film is restless, given to sudden cuts and mysterious bursts of imagined violence, and yet not much happens: as expected, the hero takes his revenge, but the motives of his victims remain veiled, and even Wilson's own grief seems cheapened by his casual termination of other lives. The movie has both the shimmer and the vacancy of an exercise in style; most beguiling by far are the scenes from Wilson's past, which Soderbergh has actually lifted from "Poor Cow," Ken Loach's 1967 film that featured Terence Stamp. It's as if the actor has only ever existed inside the movies. With Barry Newman and Lesley Ann Warren.—*A.L.* (10/11/99) (Angelika Film Center and 84th Street Sixplex.)

The Night of the Hunter (1955)—Despite its peculiar overtones of humor, this is one of the most frightening movies ever made. Robert Mitchum is the murderous, sex-obsessed, hymn-singing soul-saver with hypnotic powers, and his terrified new wife (Shelley Winters), who has a boy and a little girl from an earlier marriage, becomes his fervent disciple. He is something of a Pied Piper in reverse: adults trust him; children try to escape. The two kids' flight from the madman is a mysterious, dreamlike episode—a deliberately "artistic" suspense fantasy, broken by the appearance of a Christian variety of fairy godmother (Lillian Gish). The adaptation of Davis Grubb's novel was James Agee's last film work, and this shadowy horror fable was the first and only movie directed by Charles Laughton.—*Pauline Kael* (Miller Theatre; Nov. 1.)

ZOHAR LAZAR

North by Northwest (1959)—The title (from Hamlet's "I am but mad north-northwest: when the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw") is the clue to the mad geography and improbable plot. The compass seems to be spinning as the action hops all over the United States, and people rush about in the wrong direction. Though not as cleverly original as "Strangers on a Train," or as cleverly sexy as "Notorious," this is one of Alfred Hitchcock's most entertaining American thrillers. Just about everybody in it is a spy or a government agent, except the hero, a very smooth and appealing Cary Grant, who is mistaken for one. The heroine is Eva Marie Saint, who doesn't seem quite herself here; her flat voice and affectless style suggest a Midwestern Grace Kelly. With James Mason, Leo G. Carroll, and Martin Landau as the blue-eyed menace Leonard.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; through Nov. 2.)

Random Hearts—Harrison Ford, a gruff, miserable, and violent Washington, D.C., cop, has lost his wife in an airplane crash. Kristin Scott Thomas, a Republican congresswoman, elegant, articulate, and sophisticated, has lost her husband in the same crash. A little investigation on Ford's part yields the unpleasant discovery that the dead spouses were having an affair. Scott Thomas wants to let go; Ford wants to learn everything about the affair as a way of understanding his wife. The two survivors fight, and then make love, but the characters have been so thoroughly established as utterly unlike one another that their affair seems ridiculous. It's as if a bear had taken up with a swan: you want to look away. With Charles S. Dutton as Ford's partner. Directed with professional skill but too slow a tempo by Sydney Pollack, who appears in the movie as a cynical political advisor. Darryl Ponicsan adapted Warren Adler's novel, but the screenplay credit is given to Kurt Luedtke.—*D.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, State, Union Square, and Waverly.)

The Story of Us—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Street Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Union Square, Waverly, and Ziegfeld.)

The Straight Story—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Angelika Film Center, Cinema I, and Lincoln Square.)

That's the Way I Like It—Director Glen Goei's candy-colored homage to "Saturday Night Fever," set in Singapore, gets by (just barely) on its modest charms. The film seems to be an amalgam of Goei's favorite movies—frothy bits from "Breakfast at Tiffany's" and "The Purple Rose of Cairo" are incorporated into a soft drama about a young Bruce Lee fan with an identity crisis who finds fulfillment on the dance floor. It's a trifle, excited by its own references.—*B.D.* (Union Square.)

Three Kings—Or, "Four Men in a Humvee." At its best, David O. Russell's murderously unstable movie about the end of the Gulf War offers wild, bitter farce and fitful insights into the oddity of the conflict. At its worst, it's an irresponsible mess. Are we supposed to get excited when American soldiers charge into a bunker in search of the gold that Saddam's troops looted from Kuwait? The movie's style ranges from extravagant experimentation to cruddy action theatrics. With George Clooney, Mark Wahlberg, Ice Cube, and Spike Jonze.—*D.D.* (10/4/99) (Chelsea West, Criterion Center, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Way Down East (1920)—The plot is Victorian, but the treatment is inspired. D. W. Griffith took a creaking, dated stage melodrama and turned it into a melodramatic epic. Lillian Gish is the girl betrayed by Lowell Sherman and eventually rescued from an icy river by Richard Barthelmess. Audiences giggle at bits here and there, but not at the sequence in which she refuses to part from her dead baby. Griffith stole from Thomas Hardy, but he stole beautifully. Silent.—*P.K.* (Museum of Modern Art; Oct. 30-31.)

Wings (1927)—In his bristling yet heart-tugging adventure, William Wellman, a First World War pilot himself, took such care with the aerial combat—for instance, making sure to silhouette dogfights against deep clouds—that it seems three-dimensional. He also contrasted plane-to-plane jousting, the last haven of chivalry left in modern warfare, with scenes of ground-to-air attacks and trench and tank warfare which have a bone-crushing realism. He even frames the buddy story at the core, about a stolid rich guy (Richard Arlen) and a febrile hot-rodder (Buddy Rogers), as the last hurrah of sentiment for a roughed-up generation. With his raw, kinetic style, Wellman had a knack for making his actors reveal their emotional core. Clara Bow, as Rogers's unappreciated girl next door, steals every scene she's in with her yearning energy, and the supporting cast is full of surprises, like Henry B. Walthall's moving turn as Arlen's wheelchair-bound father and Gary Cooper's marvellous, laconic cameo as a fatalistic cadet. John Monk Saunders wrote the story; Hope Loring and Louis D. Lighton wrote the script. "Wings" was the first film to win the Academy Award for Best Picture. Silent.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; Oct. 29 and Oct. 31.)

Young Frankenstein (1974)—A farce-parody of Hollywood's mad-scientist movies. You have to let this Mel Brooks comedy do everything for you, because that's the only way it works. If you accept the silly, zizzy obviousness, it can make you laugh helplessly. Gene Wilder is the old Baron's scientist grandson, Peter Boyle is the new Monster, and Madeline Kahn is the scientist's fiancée, who becomes the Monster's bride. The picture is in black-and-white, which holds it visually close to the films it takes off from. It's Brooks's most sustained piece of moviemaking—the laughs never let up. With Cloris Leachman, Marty Feldman, Teri Garr, and Gene Hackman.—*P.K.* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Oct. 31.)

ALSO PLAYING

THE ADVENTURES OF ELMO IN GROUCHLAND: East 86th Street Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **BATS:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Union Square. . . . **BEEFCAKE:** Film Forum. . . . **THE BEST MAN:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, and Union Square. . . . **THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT** (reviewed in our issue of 7/26/99): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **BODY SHOTS:** Cinema II, East 86th Street Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE BOYS:** Cinema Village. . . . **BUENA VISTA SOCIAL CLUB:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THE CITY:** American Museum of the Moving Image and Quad Cinema. . . . **CRAZY IN ALABAMA:** Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **CREMASTER 2:** Film Forum. . . . **THE DEEP BLUE SEA:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE DINNER GAME:** Cinema Village. . . . **EARTH:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **L'ENNUI:** BAM Rose Cinemas, Cinema Village, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **FOR LOVE OF THE GAME** (9/27/99): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE GRANDFATHER:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **GUINEVERE** (9/27/99): Village East Cinemas. . . . **JULIEN DONKEY-BOY:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **LUCIE AUBRAC:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema. . . . **MOLLY:** 59th Street East Cinema and Kips Bay Theatre. . . . **MUMFORD** (10/4/99): Lincoln Square and Sutton. . . . **THE MUSE** (9/13/99): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **MYSTERY, ALASKA:** Sutton. . . . **ROMANCE** (9/27/99): BAM Rose Cinemas and Quad Cinema. . . . **RUN LOLA RUN:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **SAME OLD SONG:** Lincoln

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REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Nov. 2: "North by Northwest" (†).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—The first in a seventeen-month-long series of films from the museum's collection, this program consists of silent films from 1893 to 1928. Oct. 28 at 2:30: A program of short films made by Charlie Chaplin in 1915. . . . Oct. 29 at 7 and Oct. 31 at 5: "Wings" (†). . . . Oct. 30 at 2: "The Poor Little Rich Girl" (1917, Maurice Tourneur). . . . Oct. 30 at 5 and Oct. 31 at 1: "Way Down East" (†). . . . Nov. 1 at 2:30: "Cameo Kirby" (1923, John Ford). . . . Nov. 2 at 2:30: "The Oyster Princess" (1919, Ernst Lubitsch). . . . Nov. 2 at 3: A program of short films made at the Vitagraph Company. . . . Nov. 2 at 6: "Amarilly of Clothes-Line Alley" (1918, Marshall Neilan). . . . ¶ Oct. 28-29 at 3 and Oct. 31 at 2 and 5: Two different programs of short documentary films made for the National Film Board of Canada. . . . ¶ Oct. 28 at 6, Oct. 29 at 8:15, and Oct. 30 at 2 and 5: Two different programs of short animated films made for the National Film Board of Canada. . . . ¶ Oct. 28 at 6:30 and Oct. 29 at 3: "Women in Black" (1999, Claudia Sherwood), a documentary. . . . ¶ Nov. 2 at 6: "Near Dark" (1987, Kathryn Bigelow).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Oct. 27: Films by Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-hsien; in Taiwanese, Cantonese, Mandarin, and/or Japanese, with English subtitles. . . . ¶ A program of films featuring the music of Duke Ellington. Oct. 28 at 6:30 and 9, Oct. 29 at 1, and Oct. 30 at 3:30: "Paris Blues" (1961, Martin Ritt). . . . Oct. 29 at 3 and 8 and Oct. 31 at 2 and 7: "Anatomy of a Murder" (1959, Otto Preminger). . . . Oct. 29 at 6:30 and Oct. 30 at 2, 5:30, and 8:30: Short films featuring Ellington. . . . Oct. 30 at 7 and Oct. 31 at 5:30: "On the Road with Duke Ellington" (1995, Robert Drew), a documentary. . . . ¶ Nov. 1 at 1, 3:30, 6:15, and 9: "Camera Buff" (1980, Krzysztof Kieślowski; in Polish).

BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—Oct. 27: "Stage Struck" (1925, Allan Dwan; silent). . . . Oct. 28: "Un Coeur en Hiver" (†). . . . Oct. 29-31: A program of new films from Europe. . . . Nov. 1: "Dirigible" (1931, Frank Capra). . . . Nov. 2: "The Pram" (1963, Bo Widerberg; in Swedish).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Oct. 30 at 2: "Demon Lover Diary" (1980, Joel DeMott). . . . Oct. 30 at 4: "Wes Craven's New Nightmare" (1994, Craven). . . . Oct. 31 at 2: "Young Frankenstein" (†). . . . Oct. 31 at 4: "Videodrome" (1982, David Cronenberg).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Oct. 31 at 7, the feature will be "The Pit and the Pendulum" (1961, Roger Corman).

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through Oct. 31: Parts III and IV of Dennis Potter's "Pennies from Heaven" (1978), with Bob Hoskins. . . . Nov. 2-7: Parts V and VI of "Pennies from Heaven." (Tuesdays through Sundays at 1:30.). . . ¶ Through Dec. 19: "Andy's Funhouse: The Andy Kaufman Special" (1979). (Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 1, Thursdays at 6, Fridays at 7, and Saturdays and Sundays at 1.)

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Nov. 2 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "The Eighth Day" (1995, Jaco van Dormaël; in French).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—A program of films directed by Jiří Menzel; all in Czech, with English subtitles. Oct. 27 at 7: "Closely Watched Trains" (1966). . . . Oct. 27 at 9 and Oct. 28 at 7: "Capricious Summer" (1978). . . . Oct. 28 at 9 and Oct. 29 at 7: "Larks on a String" (1969). . . . Oct. 29 at 9 and Oct. 30 at 5: "Cutting It Short" (1980). . . . Oct. 30 at 7 and Oct. 31 at 5: "Festival of the Snowdrops" (1983). . . . Oct. 30 at 9 and Oct. 31 at 7: "My Sweet Little Village" (1985). . . . Oct. 31 at 9: "The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin" (1993).

Miller Theatre, Broadway at 116th St. (854-7799)—Nov. 1 at 6: "Out of the Past" (1947, Jacques Tourneur). . . . Nov. 1 at 8: "The Night of the Hunter" (†).

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
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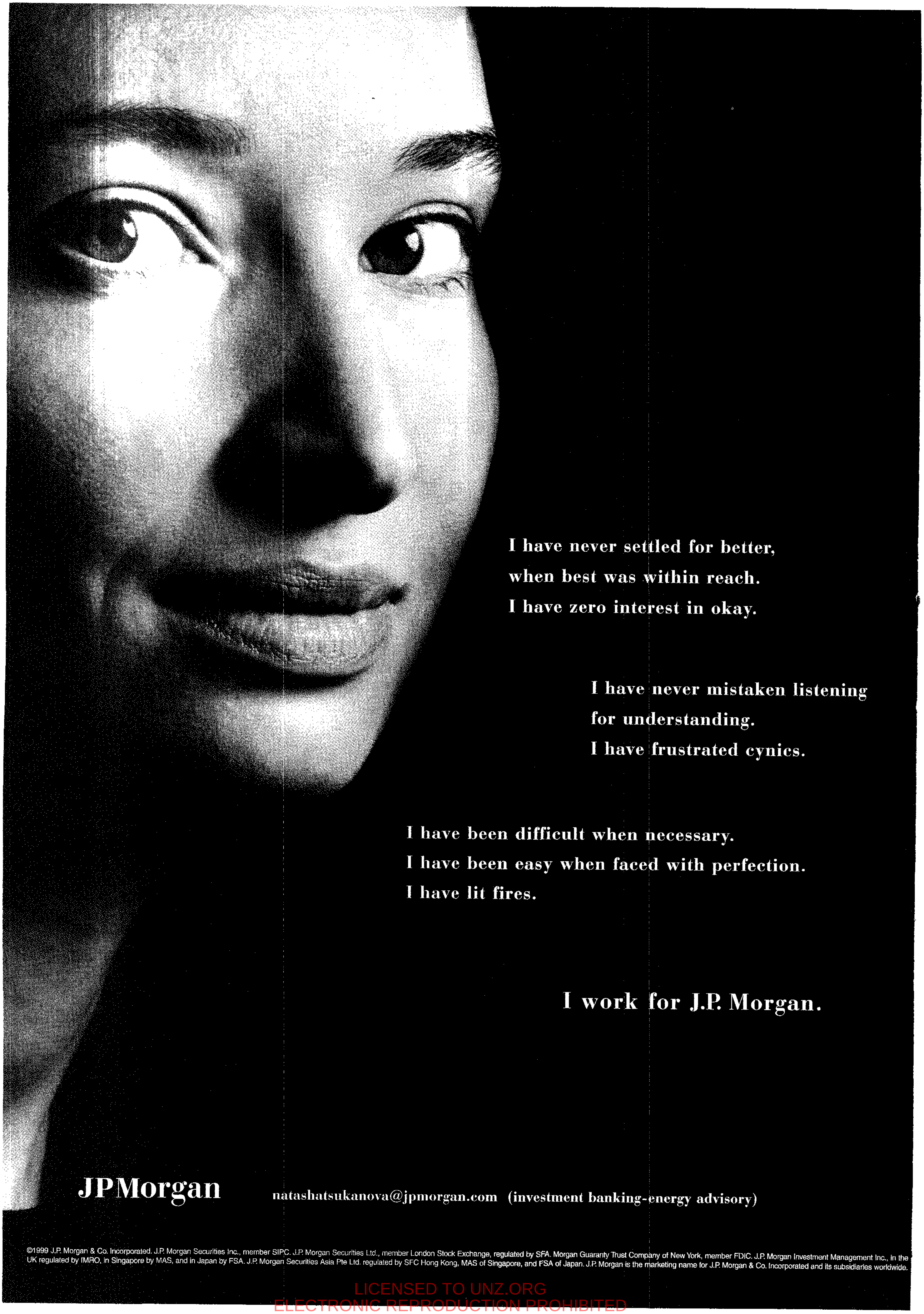

I have never settled for better,
when best was within reach.
I have zero interest in okay.

I have never mistaken listening
for understanding.
I have frustrated cynics.

I have been difficult when necessary.
I have been easy when faced with perfection.
I have lit fires.

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

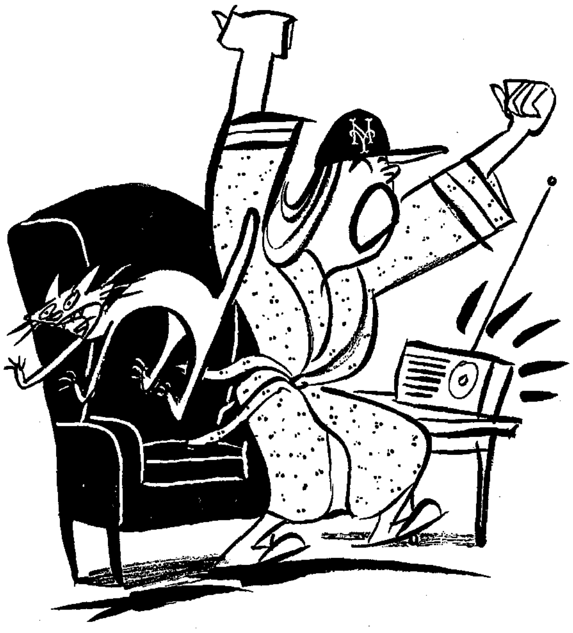
Mets win!

THIS sports week belongs to those habitual finalists the Yankees and the Braves, who are meeting in the World Series, just as they did three years ago, but some inner part of us, call it the Metsbrain, will not let go of the midnight joys and wincing pains of last week's baseball, when the other New York team went down at last in the championships after a run of innings and adventures like no other. Mets fans occupy unique territory among the loyalists of the pastime, since they must coexist with the exuberantly smug hordes of Yankee rooters, and lately have had to put up with the awkward recognition that the current Yankees, the defending World Champions, are a cool and admirable bunch. "Lovable" could be just around the corner. But Yankee fans cannot lay claim to anything like the involvements of this Mets autumn: a seven-game mid-September losing streak that nearly cost them the post-season before it began; a four-game closing run of essential wins, with a tacked-on playoff game to secure the wild-card slot; and weirdly wonderful late moments like the ninth-inning wild pitch that closed out the Pirates, and the twelfth-inning homer by a backup catcher, Todd Pratt, that took them into the championship round.

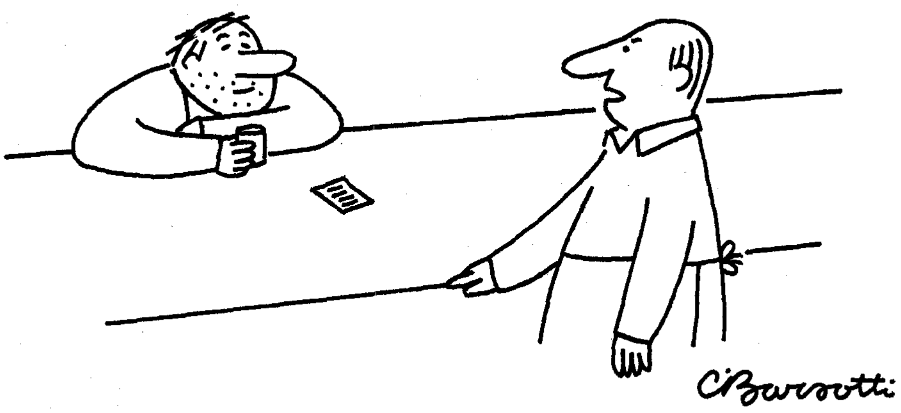
Consider now the case of a man we know, a Mets fan in good repute, in Upper Level Section 11 at Shea Stadium in the bottom of the thirteenth inning a week ago Sunday, who is asking himself (briefly and atypically) whether he shouldn't give up and go home. A couple seated right below him has just taken this course, starting down the aisle toward the exit and home, only to be pelted with recriminations and old beer cups. The Mets and Braves are tied up, 2–2, in this fifth game of the championships, and, once again, a loss will end the Mets' season. Thanks to an early start, it's only eight-thirty, which is the shank of the evening, as post-season baseball time is measured these days. It's drizzling a bit, to be sure—the skirttails of Hurricane Irene—but the umpires have called no halt to the proceedings, which must come to a famous resolution sometime soon. Well, maybe not *soon:* the Braves haven't brought in a run since the fourth inning, and the Mets not since the first, more than four hours ago. John Rocker, the hated Atlanta fireballing stopper, has just come into the game (BOOOOOO!) and set down the Mets side in order, with two strikeouts, and, to be truthful, this is rain coming down, not drizzle. Probably the Mets will lose. Why not go?

Naah—are you *crazy*? Gotta stay. He stays. Shortly, the organ strikes up "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" for the traditional fourteenth-inning stretch. Rocker does his worst and departs, allowing our man to notice that this sector of the ratty old Shea stands seem to favor the derisory "Rock-er! Rock-errr!" chant, as against the more anatomical cries over toward third base. The game slogs along, and a sign goes up on the big center-field scoreboard: "You are part of the longest playoff game in Major League history." The Mets are down to their ninth pitcher. They'll lose now, for sure. No, they win, in the bottom of the fifteenth, on Robin Ventura's grand-slam home run that becomes a grand-slam single when his teammates put up a roadblock of hugs on the base path beyond first. Coming home on the subway, our man is repeatedly hugged, too, by not quite total strangers: Mets fans. "It was like we'd overthrown a dictator," he says.

Or consider, more briefly, another serious Mets fan, a storekeeper in upstate New York, on the following night—the night when the Mets lost at last, after eleven more astounding innings. She had a bad cold, and was snugly tucked into her chair for the duration, with the radio on one side (television reception is poor in Bovina), and her cat, Hazy, in her lap on the other, but when Mike Piazza hit his two-run homer in the seventh inning, at last bringing the Mets even, at 7–7, she sprang up and began screaming. "I scared poor Hazy half out of his wits," she said later, "and then of course I had to run around the house trying to catch him and put him back in my lap, exactly the way we'd been, so the Mets



ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL



"I don't want stock options. I want you to pay your tab."

• •

would win. I never did—I couldn't reach him under the bed—and we lost. I knew it all the time." She stayed in bed the next day.

This is pitiful, but one really should be sorry for everyone else, all the rest of us, who can't think of anything to care about on anything like this scale, and might not have the nerve to hang in there, against such odds, even if we did. Thanks, Mets. Let's go, Yankees. —ROGER ANGELL

DEPT. OF HELPING HANDS

Will the rap world be the swing vote that elects President Trump?

You can say one thing for Donald Trump, the prospective Presidential aspirant: unlike a great many other political candidates, the man does not pander. In a chat last week about the possibility that he might run on the Reform Party ticket next year, Trump had a special message for any readers of this magazine who might consider him déclassé.

"They may think of me as nouveau riche," he said, "but I probably did a lot better in college than most of your readers. The old rich who fancy themselves intellectuals? Most of them have never even made any money themselves. They may look down their noses at me—but I think they kiss my ass."

Some candidates have gender gaps. Others have generation gaps. But Trump believes that he has encountered a new kind of gap: a snob gap. He may jet around the country in his own Boeing 727, his guest passengers safely snapped in by seat belts with gold-plated buckles while he catches a nap in his king-sized bed, but he says that market surveys show that the Americans who like him best and identify with him most closely are the working poor. Roger Stone, the director of Trump's Presidential Exploratory Committee, says his research reveals that the real-estate billionaire's strongest supporters are blacks and Hispanics, as well as white voters who earn less than twenty-five thousand dollars a year. "It seems to be my strength," Trump agreed. "They like a certain something."

"It's a life-style thing," one of Trump's associates suggests. "They think, If I hit the lottery—that's the way I would live. The boats, the planes, the beautiful women. That doesn't appeal to the Ph.D.s, or old money, but he's from Queens—he's got regular-guy appeal."

David Bositis, a senior political analyst with the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a think tank specializing in African-American issues, believes that part of Trump's popularity is that "he has no racial baggage." Unlike many candidates who pay lip service to racial inclusiveness, Trump conspicuously socializes with black and Hispanic celebrities, and in the party pages of glossy magazines his is often the only white face in a sea of rappers or sports stars. He has cultivated friendships with athletes such as Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, and Sammy Sosa, and hip-hop moguls such as Sean (Puffy) Combs and Russell Simmons, a founder of Def Jam Recordings. "I like Russell and Puffy," Trump said, "because they fought hard to get where they are. I did and they did. There's a certain affinity, and it goes both ways."

According to Simmons, who says that he "loves" Trump, "Donald is the epitome of what people in the trailers and the projects—the economically challenged—want. He's the American dream." Trump's name pops up often in rap and hip-hop lyrics, both as a noun, meaning money, and as an adjective, meaning luxuriously cool. (There's "Trump Change," by the West Coast rapper E-40, and a group called Da Cocoa Brovaz has a song called "Black Trump," which contains the rhyme "You rollin' like Trump, you get your meat lumped.")

But even Simmons has his doubts about Trump as President. "I'm a good friend of his," he said over the telephone from his office. "But he voted for Giuliani! What did Giuliani ever do for anyone black? Ours isn't a political friendship." After a pause (he said he had to deal with a million-dollar check that had just arrived on his desk), Simmons explained his thinking in the kind of language that Trump would surely understand: "I'd rather loan him money for something personal than for his politics. He's a great businessman, but I'm supporting Bill Bradley this week." —JANE MAYER

LIFE OF THE MIND DEPT.

The care and feeding of humanists.

Theodoric the Barbarian had no objection to keeping a few humanists in the back of his palace. They ate little, made do in cramped quarters, and could be entertaining. Eventually, though, the novelty wore off. Bored with his court philosopher, Boethius, Theodoric called him away from his scribbling (he was finishing "The Consolation of Philosophy") and had his head crushed like a grape. Barbarians did not grant tenure.

Things have got better for those who live by the pen, yet intellectuals continue to regard their patrons with a mixture of gratitude and anxiety. Hence the wide

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eyes on the day, last month, when the first set of fifteen fellows took up residence in the New York Public Library's new Center for Scholars and Writers. Carved out of the northeastern corner of the main library, this utopian habitat for humanists offers oak panelling, red serpentine marble, and soundproof glass offices, with hardwood blinds, organized around a lofty-ceilinged common room. The intellectual historian Peter Gay, who is the center's founding director, can stroll to the coffee machine and merely glance around to insure that his scholars are all hard at work.

For the next nine months, this year's fellows (I am one of them) will sit thus, pecking at their keyboards and awaiting deliveries of the library's holdings, which arrive daily on a rolling cart. With luck, they will produce something by next spring, when they are scheduled to give public lectures—answers, in effect, to the unspoken command "Show us an idea worth the fifty thousand dollars we gave you to come up with one and the nineteen-million-dollar nest we created for you to do it in."

Unaccustomed to such largesse—to fresh orchids, Herman Miller Aeron chairs, and free doughnuts—the fellows milled about at first, as if they expected to get thrown out. But acclimatization proved rapid. Allen Kurzweil, a novelist, began poring over two forbidding manuals of heraldry and initiated talks to persuade manuscript librarians to unroll for him a five-hundred-year-old, sixty-foot-long genealogical scroll of the Frankish dynasty, an exercise that would clear the restored Rose Gallery, in Astor Hall. The architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable mastered the Internet. Tony Holden, biographer of Prince Charles and Tchaikovsky, asked for Leigh Hunt's autobiography and went out for a cigarette on the Fifth Avenue steps. A delivery man arrived with a futon and several large throw pillows, which were rapidly spirited into one fellow's office.

Later that morning, Francine Prose, the novelist, and Andrew Delbanco, the literary scholar and critic, could be seen through the slats of their blinds, reading peacefully. The word "truth" could be heard near the copy machine, uttered without irony. By midday, several fellows had taken off their shoes and were moving about the common area in stockinged feet.

At lunch, which is served daily in the common room, several fellows traded tales of being on the barricades in '68. Paul Berman, the author of "A Tale of Two Utopias: The Political Journey of the Generation of 1968," was describing his student days, clashing with the "fascists" at Columbia, when Gay spoke up and announced that he had been one of those "fascists."

Gay, who as a child witnessed Kristallnacht before fleeing Germany, was quick to point out that you could easily get a hankering for law and order when student hooligans turned your office into a rebel camp, ransacked a decade's worth of notes, and made off with both of your carefully annotated volumes of Lefebvre's "La Révolution Française." Berman asked if Gay's office had been in Fayerweather Hall.

"Indeed," Gay replied.

"Then I probably slept in it," he confessed, "and maybe pawed your shelves." Did he, by chance, have two half-morocco volumes of Lefebvre? All eyes turned to Berman. "I'll check my bookshelves," he said.

The fellows retired to their cells, where they made a studious *tableau vivant* for the library's president, Paul LeClerc, that evening, when he gave a group of trustees a tour of the center. A woman of means, bejewelled and ebullient, praised the space, then peered between the blinds of one cubicle, which contained a solitary scholar staring out the window. "Look at the way they have these wonderful little . . . *refuges*," she breathed. A pause. "Like endangered species."

—D. Graham Burnett

HOW'S THAT AGAIN? DEPT.

Bush . . . has confused Slovenia and Slovakia, called Kosovars "Kosovarians" and called East Timorese "East Timorians."
—Salon, September 28, 1999.

THE INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

My fellow-Americanians:

Over the past two years, I had the special privilege of travelling this great land of ours. I shook hands with Kansanians and South Dakeutians, picked potatoes with Idahovians, and ate barbecued po'boys with Alabamaniacs.

I met the young and the old, the rich and the poor, Jewstaceans and Gentillia. I met Hawaiiticians, Alaskalopians, and Puerto Ricordians.

And, everywhere I went, the Americanian people sent the same message, loud and clear: the era of big governmentariantudinism is over.

My friends, as we begin a new millenniarium let us pledge to defend freedom everywhere, from the Montezumian halls to the Tripolistic shores.

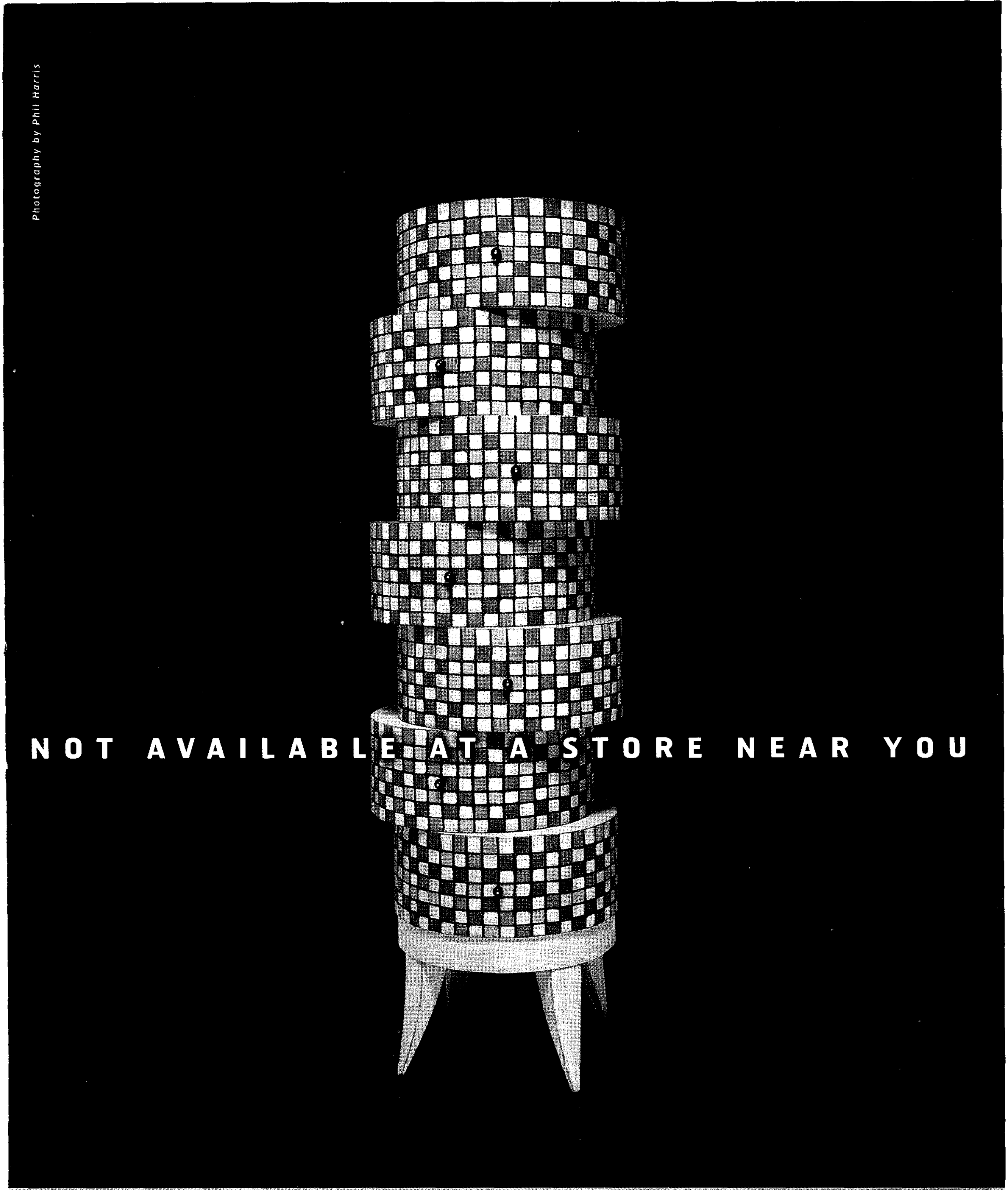
Let us send the message of freedom to all the peoples of the world: not just the Kosovarian and the East Timorian, not just the Slovakian and/or the Slovenian, but the Perugian, the Brazilliantine, the Russianomatic, and the Chineezish.

Let us work together in Washingtopolis, both Democresiacs and Republicaters. Let us recognize the issues that unite us, and stop using the labels that divide us, like "conservaticious" and "librarian."

It is time to recognize that we are all Americanians, whether we be Caucastic, Africanoodian, Asiadontic, or Hispanicky. Together, as one, we can make this country a better place—not just for us, not just for our children, but for geraniums to come.

God bless each and every one of you. And God bless Americanistan.

—Andy Borowitz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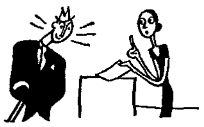
DEPT. OF RIFFRAFF

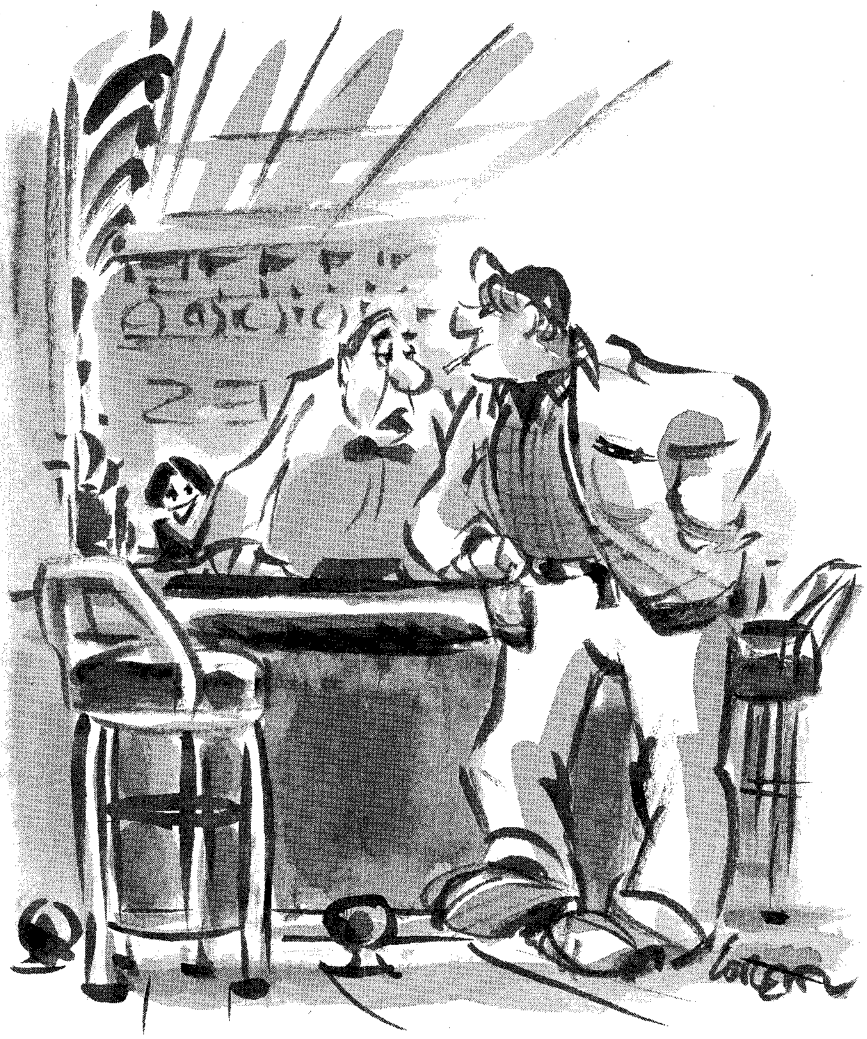
A new night club finds a way to make the doorman obsolete.



THIS Saturday, for the first time in recent memory, a New York night club will open without the benefit of a velvet rope. Three expatriate Englishmen—Terry Donovan, Sam Houser, and John Davis—are behind the club, which is called Rockstar Loft, and they have come up with a new method of attracting just the right mix of patrons. It's what Donovan solemnly calls "an extremely left-wing brand of populist élitism." If you want to get into Rockstar Loft, you have to take a standardized test.

Rockstar Loft is a monthly "party" that will be held somewhere on the West Side of Manhattan. The address is secret. Admission is free. The d.j.s are French. But, as Donovan, who is twenty-eight, pointed out the other day at the SoHo office of Rockstar Games, the video-game company he founded with Houser, "*people* make a club—not great lights, sound, famous d.j.s, or cheap drinks."

Donovan and Houser moved to New York last January and launched Rockstar Games. It quickly became successful, and they decided to branch out. "I realized there wasn't too terribly much to do in the evenings," Houser said. Six weeks ago, the partners, plus Davis, an established club promoter, began distributing flyers about Rockstar Loft around downtown Manhattan. These flyers, along with a Web site, list the phone number of a voice mailbox, where prospective clubgoers are instructed to leave their names and phone numbers. Last week, a staff of three was working full time in Donovan's apartment to return all the calls. The operators ask each applicant to answer seven questions: (1) How did you hear about Rockstar Loft? (2) Why do you want to go? (3) If you could take someone, who would it be? (4) What is it you don't enjoy about current night life in New York? (5) What's the best movie you've seen in the last two years? (6) Who is your favorite d.j.? (7) What has been the best moment in your life so far?



"Susan Faludi would like to buy you a brewski."

The answers are entered into a computer. Then, Donovan said, "when we stop returning calls, we'll sit down together and go through it all, ticking off the people we want to invite."

There are, as you might imagine, right answers and wrong answers. The partners thought it would be unwise to go into too many details, but Houser did let slip that, with regard to favorite d.j.s, "Fatboy Slim would be a wrong answer." Donovan pointed out, however, that some answers are harder to judge than others. "The movie question is a bit difficult," he said, "because you could have someone who says 'Cool Hand Luke' and someone who says 'Notting Hill,' but the person who says 'Notting Hill' could still actually be party-worthy. It's not an exact science yet."

One foolproof way *not* to get in is to refuse to play by the rules. "The worst thing people can say is 'I'm so-and-so, and I own this company, or run this record label, so I deserve to be invited.' We've made a lot of those people very angry," Houser said.

Donovan added, "We really don't care if you're a celebrity. The actress Kim Cattrall's assistant called the other day but didn't know who her favorite d.j. was."

By the time the club opens, the three founders estimate, several thousand people will have called and will have been winnowed to five hundred invitees. After Saturday, the process will start again, with different test questions, for next month's party. "It really is a fascinating experiment in social engineering," Donovan said.

Rockstar Loft's creators insist that their door policy isn't about being exclusive. "Anyone could get invited," Donovan said. "You just have to call the number."

212-714-7153. But remember: no Fatboy Slim. —ZEV BOROW

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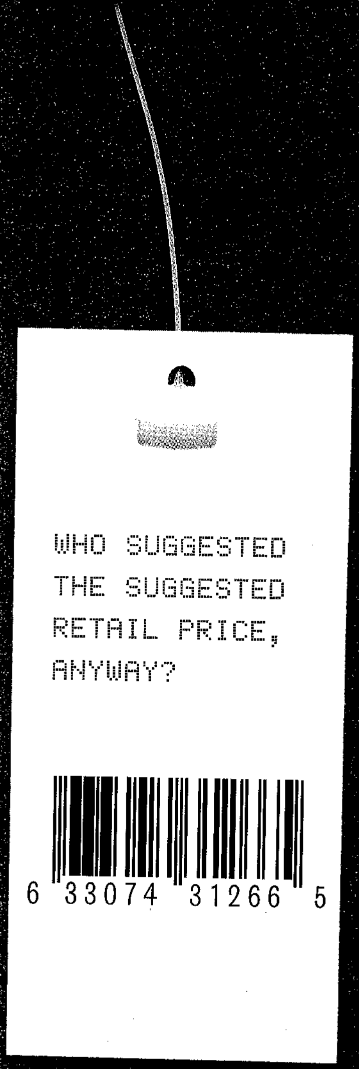
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THE POLITICAL SCENE

SILENT RUNNING

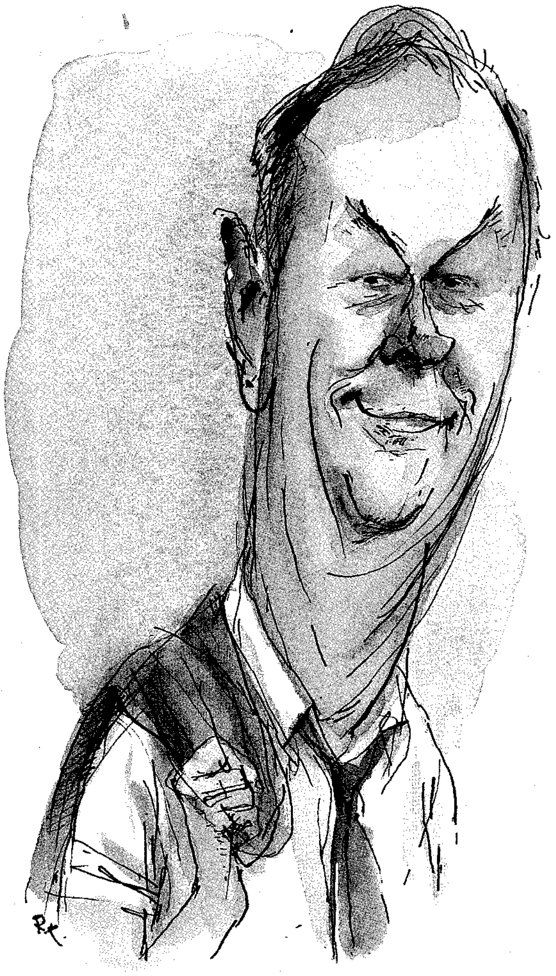
How much longer can Bill Bradley keep it casual?

BY JOE KLEIN

On a brisk Saturday evening in mid-October, just before Bill Bradley was to arrive at the Jasper County Democratic Party's chili supper, at the United Auto Workers Local 997, in Newton, Iowa, a young man named Frank Hogan was striding about the parking lot in a leather jacket and cargo pants, preparing a not-so-friendly reception for the former Senator. Hogan is a member of the Al Gore campaign staff in Iowa, and he carefully positioned a dozen volunteers, a majority of them formidable-looking U.A.W. members, near the door of the union hall and the entrance to the parking lot, as if they were about to greet a truckload of strikebreakers. He provided them with large blue "Gore 2000" signs, and with smaller placards that said "Stay and Fight"; a new battle cry of the Gore campaign, it is a cryptic reference to Bradley's decision not to run for reëlection to the Senate in 1996. (He didn't "stay and fight" the Republican Congress.)

Having deployed his troops, Hogan drilled them: "One, two, three, four: We love Al Gore! Five, six, seven, eight: We think Al's great!" The rehearsals were not stirring, but members of the Bradley advance team called the candidate to let him know that there might be trouble in Newton. The handful of reporters covering the Senator, including a camera crew from German television, readied itself for a confrontation.

And then, before anyone quite realized what was happening—before chants or heckling could be contrived—the candidate pulled up in a white minivan, unfolded himself from the back seat, and began working the crowd, shaking the hands of his opponents, who, being Iowans and therefore congenitally skewed toward civility, had little choice but to smile and welcome him to Newton. One woman, to her own apparent surprise, blurted, "Thanks for coming." Another, who had participated that morning in a race to raise funds for breast-cancer research, said, "That was a class act this morning, Senator, letting your wife have the spotlight." (Bradley had stood off to the side, beaming, as his wife, Ernestine, a survivor of breast cancer, received an award.) Even Frank Hogan seemed disarmed. "Bill, great to see you," he said when the candidate approached. "Welcome to Iowa."



Bradley's campaign—one of the best in recent history—now faces a difficult transition.

RICHARD THOMPSON

Once again, the awkward efforts of the Gore campaign had been boggled by the amiable cleverness of his challenger: this has been the Democrats' race for the Presidency. Gore's anguish—his neon changes of strategy, tactics, consultants, headquarters, and even wardrobe—has provided most of the journalistic fun this autumn (and much of the propulsion for his opponent's campaign). But the artful languor of the Bradley effort deserves some attention, too: he has run an extremely effective campaign, one of the very best in recent memory. Now, though, it faces a difficult transition. The race is about to intensify. Debates with Gore are imminent. Actual voting begins in less than three months, in Iowa, on January 24th. Bradley's notional, discursive stump style will have to be distilled into nightly sound bites. The attention of the media will move—indeed, it will be dragooned by the Vice-President—from Gore's deficits to Bradley's: the challenger's aloof, anti-charismatic messianism; his occasional jarring descents into politics as usual (his bald switch in favor of federal support for ethanol, a grain-based fuel additive that mostly benefits one agribusiness conglomerate, Archer Daniels Midland); his impatience with the press; the tension between his record of moderation and his attempts to woo liberals. "It's been an artillery duel so far," James Carville, a Gore supporter who has admired the intelligence and discipline of the Bradley campaign, says. "But now we move to bayonets. They're gonna begin to smell each other's breath."

As a rule, senators do not make good Presidential candidates. They tend to be haughty, myopic, and too persnickety to be inspirational; they think legislatively and speak subcommittee, a muddy and arcane dialect. (I once saw a New Hampshire voter ask Bob Dole about acid rain only to be told, dismissively, "The bill's in markup.") John Kennedy was the last senator to move directly to the White House, and he did so to the astonishment of his colleagues, who considered him a truant at best. Bill Bradley, by contrast, was a perfect turtle of a senator, re-

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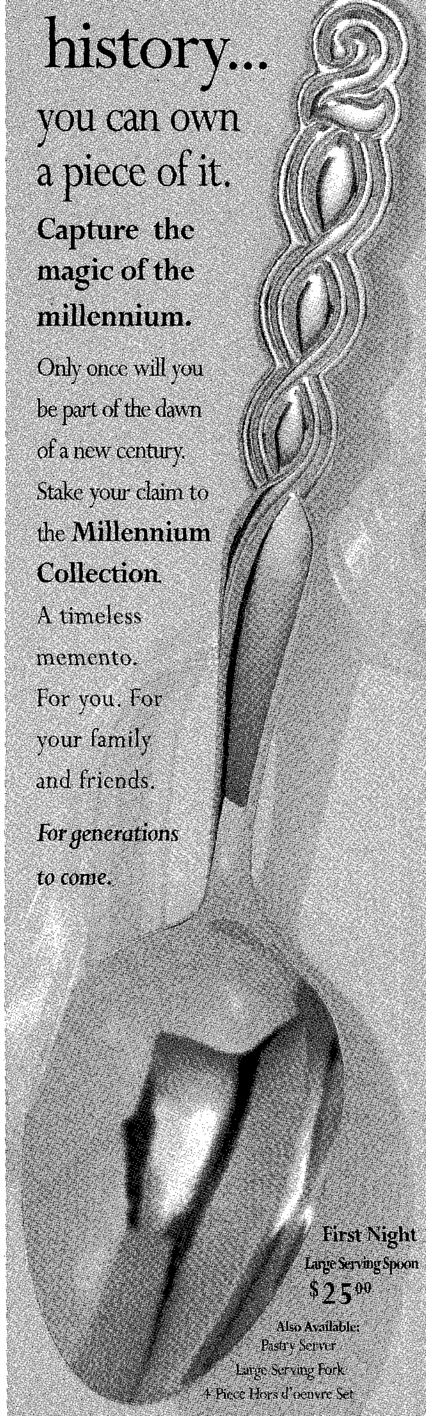

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spected for his lugubrious expertise on issues like tax reform and Third World debt. He spent eighteen years on the Finance Committee, which is the Senate's equivalent of Skull and Bones, a secret realm of power and codicils. He was often mentioned as a possible candidate for President—a consequence more of his athletic past than of his legislative present, one suspects—but he seemed destined to join the ranks of John Glenn, Bob Dole, Ted Kennedy, Phil Gramm, and countless other legislative legends who were utter flops in the larger arena.

"He's changed. He's a completely different guy now," Senator Bob Kerrey, of Nebraska, a Bradley supporter, says. "He's much more like the fifteen-year-old kid he must have been, driven to succeed at basketball, than the United States senator I knew. He's very determined, much more focussed. We always knew he had the talent and, certainly, the integrity to be President. What was missing was the commitment. But you can't doubt that now: he is unflappable, absolutely intent on becoming President. And he's having fun at it."

Indeed, Bradley's campaign has been strikingly un-senatorial (a development that is all the more surprising since the core of his campaign staff consists of his longtime Senate aides). Unlike most senators, Bradley doesn't orate; he has spent many fruitless hours in speech training over the years and appears to have simply given up trying to dramatize himself. His voice is odd, simultaneously thin and husky. He slurs words; for example, his father suffered from "cass'ified'thritis" (calcified arthritis). He speaks softly, conversationally, disdaining the formulaic locutions of market-tested politics, although he does occasionally sink into New Age quicksand. More than once, I've seen him lose an audience as he tried to explain his goal of "interconnectedness," whatever that is. But he will also, at unexpected moments, drift into a diffident eloquence. On October 2nd, in a speech to the Human Rights Campaign, a homosexual lobbying group, he said, "One day, the different variations nature plays on the theme of human existence will delight, not frighten, us."

The casual manner is authentic Bradley—"authentic" is a word his supporters tend to toss around, worshipfully, the way others have used "charismatic"—but it is not without guile. Obviously, there is a market for the appearance of authenticity this year, especially with a front-runner as severely synthetic as Gore has seemed. Yet the true surprise of the Bradley campaign has been its substance, not its style.

"Issues," Jerry Brown once said, in the midst of his ethereal 1976 campaign for the Presidency, "are the last refuge of a scoundrel." He was right—at least, in terms of the way issues are traditionally handled by candidates for the Presidency. A pollster is dispatched to find out what the public is interested in, and then the candidate offers a "revolutionary" proposal that is almost always quite a bit less than it seems. In the current campaign, for instance, the electorate appears to be most exercised about "education." Both front-runners, Gore and George W. Bush, have dutifully delivered education speeches. But Bradley hasn't and won't; he appreciates the importance of education, but he points out that "ninety-two per cent of the money is controlled at the state level." It is, in other words, a mild form of consumer fraud to claim that a President can "revolutionize" elementary and secondary schools.

Instead, Bradley has given speeches on issues that are less prominent on most pollsters' radar screens—gun control, campaign-finance reform, health care, and child poverty. (He plans two more, on foreign policy and on national defense, and then, he told me, a final speech in January, "placing all of this in a coherent narrative.") "How did we choose these issues?" Eric Hauser, his press secretary, asks, with a laugh. "He chose them. They were what he wanted to do from the beginning. This isn't a campaign that recalculates the game plan every four months because this or that doesn't poll well in the South—that may be bad politics, but it's just not how Bradley operates." (Bradley does have a pollster, Diane Feldman, on staff, and also media consultants and speechwriters.)

The issues Bradley has chosen are quirky, difficult topics. In each case, the Senator has proposed an extremely controversial solution. He has proposed a ban on cheap handguns, the registration of all handguns, and the licensing of handgun owners. He has proposed public financing of congressional campaigns (a potentially disastrous notion in a year when public financing of the Presidential campaign seems destined to contribute twelve million dollars, via the Reform Party, to the executive fantasies of Pat Buchanan or Donald Trump). He has remained opposed to Clinton's 1996 welfare-reform initiative, despite that program's apparent success. And, most remarkably, he has announced his intention to spend as much as sixty-five billion dollars more per year on making health insurance available to any American who wants it.

The health-care proposal was unveiled on September 28th, the day before Al Gore announced that he had suddenly "heard the music of the American people" and was moving his campaign to Nashville. The Gore announcement knocked the Bradley plan off the front pages, but there was a symmetry to the moment: both candidates were taking enormous risks—risks that would define their campaigns. Gore, however, was spending political capital on appearances; Bradley, on substance.

"There's no better example of the different kinds of Presidencies we would lead," Bradley said that day, comparing his effort to Gore's more limited health-care proposal. He had reason to be proud: his plan was bolder, more plausible, and yet possibly less controversial than the Clinton health-care proposal of 1994. It created no new bureaucracies; it mandated no new burdens for employers. Essentially, Bradley had found himself not far from a model developed by Stuart Butler, of the conservative Heritage Foundation: a voucher system for health insurance. (Bradley backed away from a significant cost control that Butler favored: a means test that would, in effect, increase taxes for the wealthy to help pay the costs of health insurance for the working poor.) "Bradley's plan came straight out of the New Democrat blueprint," said an admiring Will Mar-

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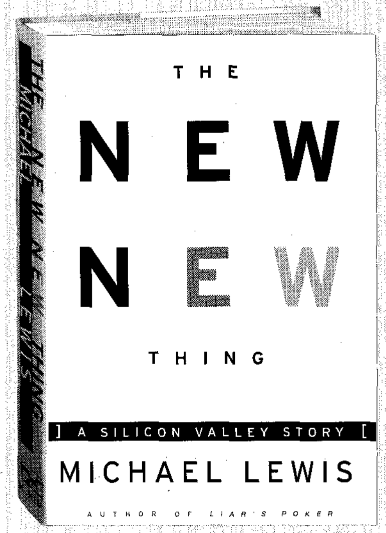

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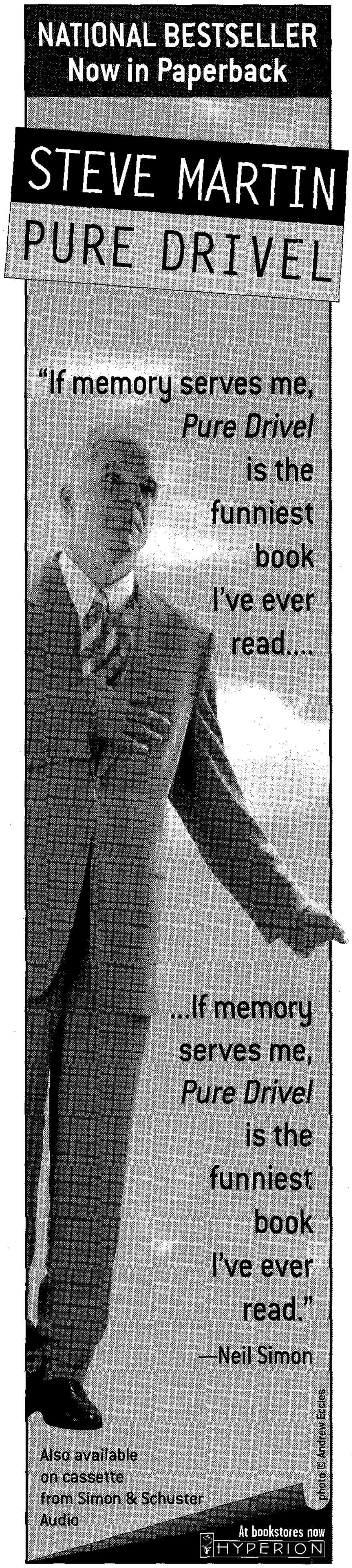
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shall, of the Progressive Policy Institute, who is a Gore supporter. "He won plaudits from conservatives for the style and from liberals for the price tag."

The price tag and some of the details of the plan were immediately attacked by the Gore campaign. "You have a one-trillion-dollar budget surplus over the next ten years," Elaine Kamarck, Gore's policy director, said. "If Bradley spends six hundred and fifty billion dollars on health care, he can't save Medicare and he can't do much else."

Bradley airily dismissed the criticism a few weeks later, as we drove through Des Moines in his campaign van. "You're not writing a *bill,*" he scoffed. "You're trying to lay out broad themes. Let the people see the plan, decide if this is the general direction they want to go. If you win, you have a mandate—like Reagan in 1981—and then you work on the details with the Congress."

When I suggested that he and Gore seemed to approach policymaking from opposite directions—Gore more pragmatically, operating within the constraints of the budget estimates; Bradley more grandly, from what he perceived to be the "needs of the country"—he launched a rare attack on Gore: "When the Washington *Post* added up the Vice-President's ideas and found he was proposing $1.3 trillion in spending over ten years, well, then, all of a sudden his people said they had cut their tax cut in half and that universal preschool wasn't so universal anymore." Bradley shook his head and grinned. "The point is, these numbers change pretty quickly."

In millennial politics, speed rules. Even a clunky candidacy can whip itself around—change tactics, prepare ads, respond—in a matter of hours. And, since early October, the Gore effort has been showing signs of celerity. It was no accident that the Vice-President announced a campaign shakeup at the same moment that Bradley was announcing a health-care initiative. Political reporters love shakeups, endure substance. And it was no accident that the Vice-President scheduled a late-October speech on fatherhood for the day before Bradley was to unload his child-poverty opus. Gore's speech was overwhelmed by Elizabeth Dole's departure from the Republican race—it received zero press attention—but it was fascinating nonetheless. It recognized that child poverty is often a consequence, these days, of parental irresponsibility—of out-of-wedlock births, of fathers who walk away (and, implicitly, of single mothers who don't take advantage of existing, underutilized programs). Bradley's plan had a big price tag—$9.8 billion—and some very creative ideas, but Gore's seemed fresher, more realistic. For once, the Vice-President was winning the intellectual argument.

Gore's brisk contentiousness is a real challenge for Bradley, who has had the luxury, so far, of moving at his own graceful lope. It is a problem that the Senator's closest aides acknowledge, a conundrum that the candidate seemed to be working through in the days before his first direct confrontation with Gore.

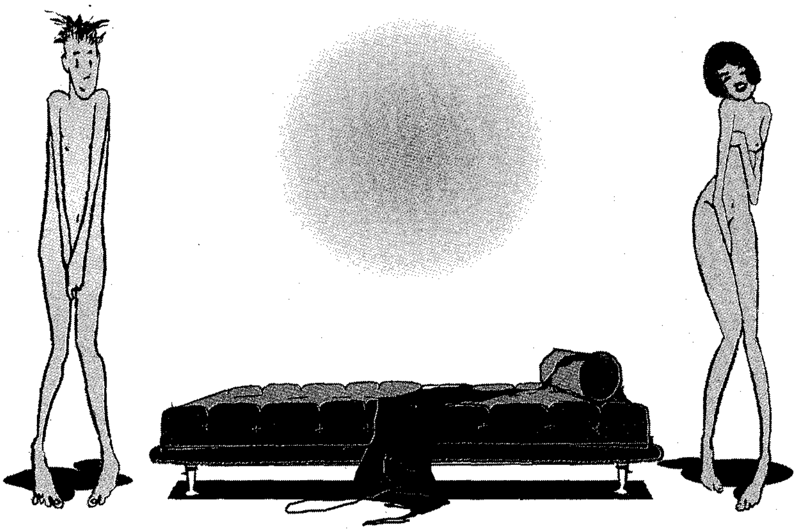
After he disarmed the Gore demonstration outside the union hall in Newton, Bradley faced an overwhelmingly pro-Gore audience within. He began his usual stump speech, but he quickly abandoned it—an exceedingly rare departure for an extremely disciplined candidate. He seemed to be using the crowd, predominantly blue-collar workers, to test a new, more combative rhetoric. He tried a direct comparison with Gore, on health care, but seemed to lose the crowd in the details.

Then came another experiment, this one with tone. He told a familiar story—about the crowds of lobbyists who jammed the Senate Finance Committee looking for special treatment whenever a tax bill was being discussed, and the rows of empty seats whenever money to alleviate poverty was on the agenda. He spoke more forcefully than usual, almost angrily, striding back and forth, leaning down into the audience, clutching the microphone in his hand as if it were an ice-cream cone with a teetering top scoop. This seemed to work better. He finished the story, pulled back, and said, "I see the signs"—the Gore placards—"around the room. That doesn't bother me. Looking in your eyes, I kind of have the feeling we're on the same team." That seemed wishful thinking. Sports analogies should be avoided at all cost with (and, perhaps, by) Bill Bradley. But, at that moment, one sensed that the candidate had finished a strenuous training drill and—jiggling his limbs to stay loose—was starting to fret about a difficult season to come. ♦

SHOUTS & MURMURS

HERE'S A REALLY GREAT IDEA

BY DAVID OWEN



If you've been married for a really long time, as I have, you probably don't need me to tell you that marriage can get a little boring after a while. Oh, boy, can it get boring. But it doesn't have to! There are quite a few little tricks and other things you can do to make it a lot more exciting and just plain fun. Here's one of them: having sexual intercourse.

One of the things I like best about having sexual intercourse is that it really is an awful lot of fun. How much fun? Flying a kite, going to the circus, riding a horse, going out for ice cream—add all those things together and multiply by two. Seem like a lot? Sure does. But you're not even halfway to sexual intercourse. Go ahead, think all you want—you're just not going to come up with anything more fun than this.

Getting in the mood for sexual intercourse is easy. Drinking a lot of beer or going to a movie can do the trick, especially if the movie is rated R or higher. Popular fiction usually contains scenes that put one in a sexual-intercourse frame of mind. Sometimes a walk downtown or a trip to the beach can make you suddenly think, Whoops, I know what I want to do! (Or have.)

Don't worry—there's no right or wrong way to have sexual intercourse. Just start having it, and then take it from there! I like to have it this way, that way, any old way. And the more of it I have, the better—it's that much fun. You'll probably think of different ways to have it. If so, be my guest!

When is the best time to have sexual intercourse? How about any day of the week with a name that ends in "d-a-y." (See what I mean?) Try having it at night, before you go to sleep. You're already in bed and not wearing very much—so why not! Feeling bored? Having sexual intercourse is the perfect change of pace. Worried about work? Having sexual intercourse will take your mind off your job. Lost your keys? You don't need keys to have sexual intercourse.

And later that same night, if your keys are still lost . . . well, you get the idea!

But don't take my word for it. Try having sexual intercourse yourself and see if you don't agree. After all, it's more popular than ever. And I really think you're going to like it, too. If you don't, though, you'd better keep it to yourself, because I can tell you right now that I am honestly not going to believe you. ♦

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ANNALS OF LAW

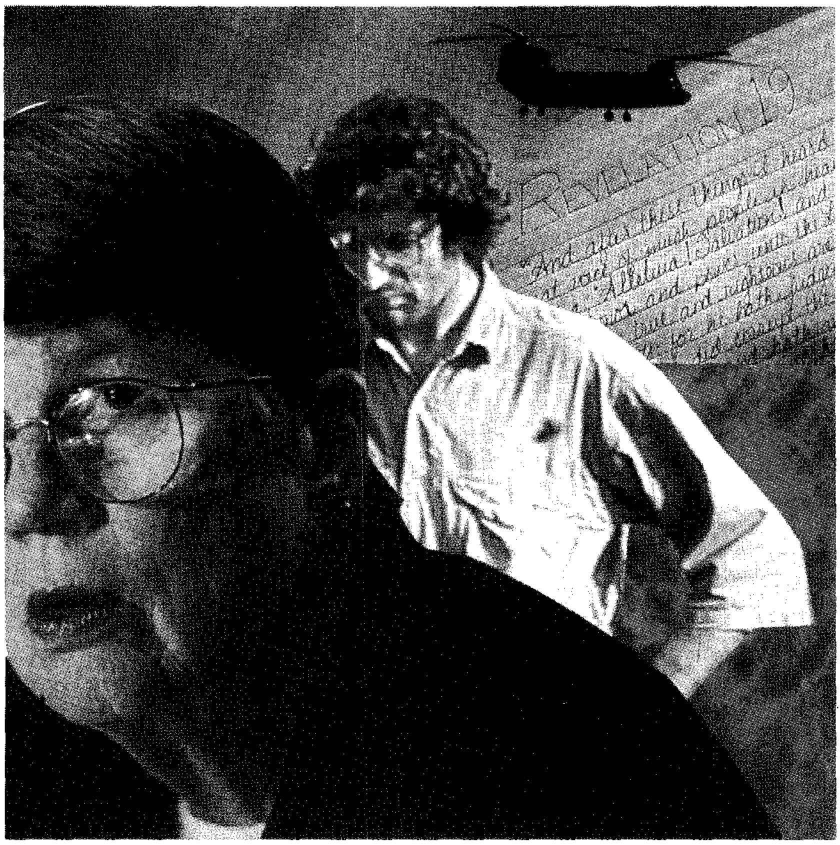
BURNED

As if the Justice Department hadn't made enough enemies over Waco.

BY PETER J. BOYER

IN late September, the first of several Ryder trucks pulled up behind an old, yellow brick federal building in downtown Waco, Texas. Its cargo was the guns, grenade casings, spent bullets, fire-singed clothing, and other relics collected from the ashes of the Branch Davidian compound at Mount Carmel, where, on April 19, 1993, David Koresh and some eighty of his followers died after a confrontation with the F.B.I. The Davidian debris, which had been carefully catalogued and boxed by the Texas Rangers, was carted to a basement room and put under lock and key. A chain-link cage inside the room now holds, among other firearms, a .50-calibre machine gun and an AK-47 from the Davidian arsenal. A smashed metal door from the compound, mud-smeared and pierced by bullets, leans against a far wall, next to a vividly colored hand-painted sign bearing the legend "Ranch Apocalypse." The material—there is tons of it—is vital evidence in several Washington investigations, as well as in a civil suit, brought by the Davidians' survivors against the United States government, for wrongful death. It is also the macabre inventory of conspiracy theorists who hold the government guilty of mass homicide at Mount Carmel.

The Rangers had been keeping the evidence since 1993, on behalf of the government, but in late summer, in a remarkable turn in the case, federal Judge Walter S. Smith, Jr., of Waco, ordered the material placed in the custody of his court, to deflect the perception that "the government may have the opportunity to conceal, alter, or fail to reveal evidence." Smith's message seemed clear: the United States Department of Justice, which is defending the government, could not be trusted to control the evidence.



Janet Reno and David Koresh. The Justice Department's actions have strengthened the very forces in our society which the department wishes to quell.

STEPHEN KRONINGER (ROBERT TRIPPETT/SIPA, POZARIK/LIAISON, SHELLY KATZ, F. W. S. T.)

In his order, Judge Smith expressed concern about a growing public suspicion, "whether warranted or not, that there is a massive coverup regarding the evidence." Privately, Smith is said to be at least as worried by government missteps that have fed those suspicions. Six years ago, Attorney General Janet Reno, among others, swore before Congress that F.B.I. agents had not fired pyrotechnic devices into the Davidian compound. Even after one of her own lawyers at Justice tried to warn her, she continued to insist that she'd seen no evidence to the contrary. Finally, over the summer, as evidence began to mount, the F.B.I. was forced to admit that pyrotechnic gas-delivery devices had been used. What's more, it developed that Justice Department and bureau officials, who had listened silently to Reno's resolute denials, knew that the devices had been used at Waco.

The Waco controversy persists partly because it is a primal American drama, complete with guns, religion, martyrdom, and apocalypse. But it is revived and sustained by the taint of political coverup. Committees in both the House and the Senate have begun new investigations into the Justice Department's role regarding Waco. Yet another investigation, ordered by Reno, is being conducted by the former Republican Senator John Danforth, of Missouri, to "answer the dark questions" about Waco, as he put it. Among other things, Danforth wants to know whether F.B.I. agents fired their guns at the Davidians. The bureau maintains that its men did not fire a single shot, but Danforth has viewed a videotape of the confrontation, recorded by government surveillance aircraft, that seems to suggest otherwise.

Those with an anti-government view accuse federal agents of a range of sins at Waco, from contributing to the fire to preventing the Davidians' escape by shooting at them. There is no evidence that the government conspired to kill the Davidians, and its contention that Koresh and others deliberately set the fire is still widely accepted, but almost from the moment the flames died the F.B.I. and the Department of Justice seemed determined to avoid embarrassment, even at the cost of credibility. In the absence of forthrightness, suspicions have taken root and flourished. (According to polls, a majority of Americans believe that the F.B.I. lied about the events.) The Justice Department's actions have, in fact, strengthened the very anti-government forces in our society which the department wishes to quell.

ONE of the specific questions being addressed by investigators is whether an F.B.I. sniper fired into the compound from Sierra One, the code name for sniper position No. 1, an F.B.I. undercover perch that faced the compound from a house across the street. Several weeks after the fire, an F.B.I. Special Agent named Charles Riley, a trained sniper, told an F.B.I. investigator that on the morning of the assault he saw agents move their Combat Engineering Vehicles, which had been borrowed from the Army, toward the compound, and then saw them ejecting gas. Then, the investigator's report states matter-of-factly, "Riley related he heard shots fired from sniper position #1."

Sierra One was manned by the Blue sniper team, which was headed by a veteran F.B.I. sharpshooter named Lon Horiuchi. Eight months earlier, during another armed standoff, in Ruby Ridge, Idaho, Horiuchi had fired at an associate of an anti-government activist named Randy Weaver, and had killed Weaver's wife instead. Weaver's son and another man were also killed during the eleven-day standoff. The incident eventually became a rallying call to anti-government militants, but at the time of the Waco siege Horiuchi's role at Ruby Ridge was not well known. (In 1997, he was charged with involuntary manslaughter, but the case was dismissed the next year, when a judge ruled that Horiuchi had acted in the line of duty.)

In 1995, attorneys for the Davidian survivors learned of Horiuchi's presence at Waco, and the following year they submitted Riley's report mentioning the sniper gunfire in a filing before Judge Smith. The F.B.I. then dispatched another agent to conduct a new interview with Riley. This time, Riley said that he'd been misunderstood in the first report—that what he'd actually heard was not gunfire from Sierra One but someone in Sierra One shouting "Gunfire!"

Michael Caddell, a Houston-based lawyer who is the lead attorney for the plaintiffs in the Davidians' suit against the government, is predictably skeptical of Riley's retraction. "The fact that Horiuchi was in charge of Sierra One heightens your suspicions that, in fact, there was gunfire, and that they are covering it up, or refusing to acknowledge it," Caddell says. He points to the fact that a dozen spent .308 shells—the same calibre bullet that killed Mrs. Weaver—were found inside Sierra One. The F.B.I. says that those shells were fired by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, on February 28th, during the initial gunfight with the Davidians. One of the congressional committees investigating Waco is considering whether to order ballistic tests to determine who fired the shots.

BILL JOHNSTON, the Assistant United States Attorney in Waco, who helped prosecute and convict Davidians accused of killing four A.T.F. agents in the original shootout, is known as an aggressive prosecutor and a straight arrow, and in his physical aspect he fits the part of a Texas lawman. He is six feet four, and is inclined to cultivate the cowboy mystique. The wall of his outer office is dominated by a poster-size photograph of him with some of his law-enforcement pals, posing on the prairie in jeans, boots, and Stetsons, and carrying long guns.

Johnston identifies closely with the Texas Rangers, who also enjoy a straight-arrow reputation, and during the Davidian siege, which lasted seven weeks, he asked them to act as the investigating agency in the case. The Rangers agreed, and they were temporarily sworn in as United States marshals.

By bringing in the Rangers, however, Johnston inadvertently created the means by which the Justice Department in Washington—"Main Justice," as it is called—kept the Davidian evidence from reporters, plaintiffs' investigators, and the public. The Justice dodge worked this way: When independent investigators asked for access to the material, at the Rangers' evidence vault in Austin, they were told, accurately, that permission would have to be granted by the Justice Department in Washington; invariably, Freedom of Information Act requests to the department received the reply that it didn't have the evidence—the Texas Rangers did.

Michael McNulty, the principal researcher for two documentaries critical of the government's version of events, tried a different tactic—he attempted to enlist Johnston's help. Johnston was not a fan of

"MONUMENTAL"
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"RIVETING"
—Christopher Ogden, *The New York Times*

"FASCINATING"
—Laura Shapiro, *Newsweek*

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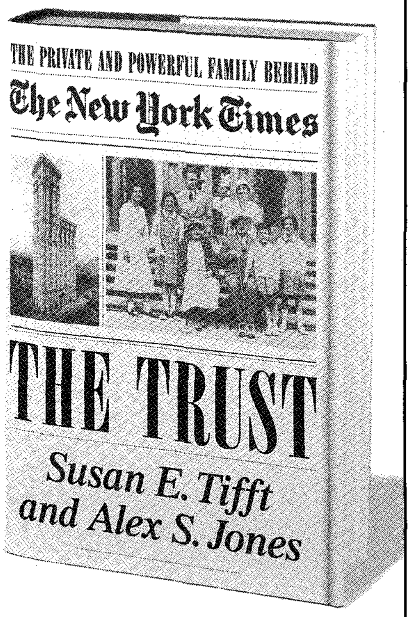

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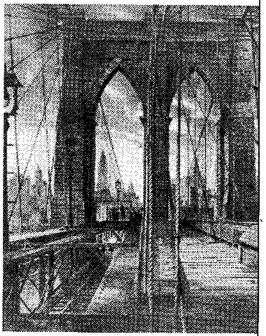

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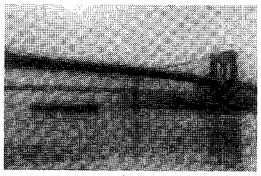

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the first film that McNulty had contributed to, "Waco: The Rules of Engagement," an anti-government polemic. On the other hand, Johnston knew that the government's lack of coöperation only heightened suspicions about Waco.

McNulty had a piece of information that he hoped would make Johnston more sympathetic to his position. McNulty had learned of a heated debate among officers of the Army's Combat Applications Group, in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, regarding the involvement of the Army's élite Special Operations team, Delta Force, in the Waco standoff. It was a subject of the highest sensitivity, because American law forbids the use of United States military units in hostile operations against American citizens. The Delta Force presence at Waco is another issue on which the government's forthrightness has been questioned. At first, Delta Force's involvement was not acknowledged; then it was asserted that three Delta Force soldiers were at Mount Carmel, but only as "observers." Now the Army has admitted that ten Delta Force team members were at Waco. McNulty obtained a file holding records of that debate, in which the unit's legal staff expressed concern over the Delta Force involvement. When McNulty showed Johnston the military file, Johnston became convinced that the government was keeping some damaging secrets.

Johnston decided to help McNulty get at the evidence, and informed Janet Reno's top public-affairs officer that he was doing so. Over a period of several months, McNulty toured the Rangers' evidence room four times, once accompanied by Johnston and the Rangers, the other times solely by the Rangers. McNulty knew just what he was searching for. He had seen a photograph, taken by a Ranger at the scene after the fire, of something that looked like a military gas cannister, a bubble-headed object with a red stripe—which, McNulty knew, was a pyrotechnic device. McNulty, who brought along an explosives expert on one of his visits, could not find the cannister among the evidence, but he did discover two other projectiles that he believes are also pyrotechnic. He shared this information with the Rangers and with Johnston, and he says that last November he detailed his discovery and his speculation about what it meant in a letter to the Justice Department's public-affairs office. Still, the department continued to publicly deny that pyrotechnic devices had been used at Waco.

Johnston began to grow uneasy, as did the Rangers. But most discomfited, perhaps, were lawyers in the Justice Department's torts branch, who were preparing a defense of the government in the Davidians' wrongful-death suit, and were anticipating a key moment in the proceedings. The defense team had put together what it hoped would be its big play—a hundred and forty-four pages of motions asking Judge Smith to dismiss the case. Judge Smith was expected to rule on the motions in early summer.

As it happened, McNulty had also shared his discoveries inside the evidence vault with the plaintiffs' attorney, Caddell, and in June McNulty submitted an affidavit summarizing his findings to the plaintiffs' legal team, which then submitted it to Judge Smith. In Washington, a career Justice attorney named Marie Hagen, one of the lead lawyers on the government's defense team, was incensed to learn that Johnston had helped McNulty (and, through him, the plaintiffs) gain access to the evidence. She telephoned Johnston at home on a Saturday morning last spring, and, as Johnston puts it, "growled" at him, "Did you let McNulty see the evidence?" When he told her that he had, he says, "she was very disturbed."

Back in Texas, events moved quickly once the knowledge of the pyrotechnic devices began to spread. Jim Francis, the chairman of the Rangers' administrative parent, the Public Safety Commission, decided that the Justice Department had used the Rangers to shield the evidence, and he wanted out. He had the department's lawyers file a motion with Judge Smith asking to be relieved of responsibility for the evidence, and he did something else that would prove significant: He ordered an inventory of the evidence, asking his investigators to pay particular attention to the projectiles that McNulty and his expert claimed were pyrotechnic devices. "They spent most of their inquiry on those issues that McNulty had raised," Johnston says. "Those projectiles really did have the appearance of being trouble."

ON July 1st, Judge Smith made his long-awaited ruling on the government's motions to dismiss the case. Smith had never shown much sympathy for the Davidians, and had meted out stiff sentences to those convicted of shooting the A.T.F. agents at the original gun battle. Not surprisingly, he threw out most of the plaintiffs' claims. But he allowed a key issue to live for judgment by a jury in trial: Did the F.B.I. fire into the compound, preventing Davidians from escaping, as the plaintiffs claimed? "If Plaintiffs' allegations are true, due process would be implicated as such behavior would rise to a level that would shock the conscience," Smith wrote in his ruling. Smith cited the expert opinion of Edward Allard, a former government specialist on infrared imagery, who had joined the plaintiffs' side. Allard had submitted an affidavit in which he declared that a Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) surveillance video, recorded by the government during the gas assault, revealed bursts of automatic gunfire coming from government agents.

The Judge also allowed the plaintiffs' claim against one government defendant to stand. The F.B.I. sniper Lon Horiuchi, the Judge wrote in his opinion, occupied the sniper position from which another agent reported that he heard the sound of gunfire. Smith was obviously unimpressed by the government's assertion that Riley, who had initially reported the gunfire, had been misunderstood.

Judge Smith's ruling was a victory for the plaintiffs, and it shifted the focus to the evidence stacked in the Rangers' storage vault in Austin, which would now be considered by a jury. By July, the Rangers' examination of the evidence was nearing completion, and some of what they were finding was disturbing. A Ranger investigator named Joey Gordon, who was Bill Johnston's contact, said that many crime-scene photographs had been "borrowed" by the F.B.I. and never returned. More important, Gordon reported, McNulty's assertions about the pyrotechnic devices were apparently true.

By E-mail, Johnston began reporting what he was hearing from the Rangers to his superior, the United States Attorney in San Antonio, Bill Blagg, who told Johnston that he had forwarded the reports to top Reno aides in Washington. In early August, Johnston faxed Blagg copies of the specifications of a .40-mm. M651 gas round, whose casing had been found among the evidence. It was a pyrotechnic device, and was not one of the plastic "ferret" rounds that the F.B.I. and the Justice Department had insisted were the only projectiles their agents fired during the assault. To drive the point home, Johnston also faxed to Blagg the transcript of sworn testimony given before a congressional committee in 1995 by a member of the Justice Department's prosecution team. The prosecutor had begun his testimony by telling the committee members that "more than anyone else involved with the case, we had the opportunity to review all of the investigative reports and materials and to speak with the vast majority of witnesses." He said he was there to dispel some of the "myths" that had grown out of the Waco event, and promised "to continue to assist you in your search for the truth."

In his fax to Blagg, Johnston underlined one sentence in the government lawyer's statement: "On the 19th of April, though repeatedly fired upon by the occupants of Mount Carmel, the F.B.I. did not fire a shot, other than the non-lethal ferret rounds which carried the gas."

Johnston now knew that the prosecutor's statement was wrong. "He'll have to answer for that, most likely," Johnston told Blagg, "and Congress will want to know why he misled them."

But, to Johnston's dismay, the Justice Department continued to deny that the F.B.I. had fired any pyrotechnic devices. Blagg tried to reassure Johnston by E-mail, saying that he had reported everything that Johnston had told him directly to the highest levels of Justice in Washington, adding, "I have every reasonable reason to believe that the AG has been informed of whatever it is that you have reported to me."

Still, Justice continued its denials, telling Lee Hancock, a reporter for the Dallas *Morning News*, that allegations about pyrotechnic devices were "nonsense." Johnston says, "I waited, and it didn't get any better, and eventually I determined in my mind that one of two things was happening. The worst was that this had been given to the Attorney General and she was intentionally continuing to mislead the public about it. Or some chasm had formed between what I'm sending and what she's saying. There's a breach somewhere."

Johnston began to suspect that the department might be bending, if not breaking, federal discovery rules requiring lawyers to reveal key information to the other side. To confirm his suspicions, Johnston telephoned Caddell, the plaintiffs' lawyer, and asked if he had tried to

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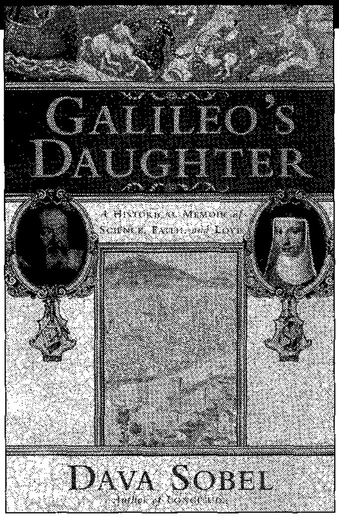

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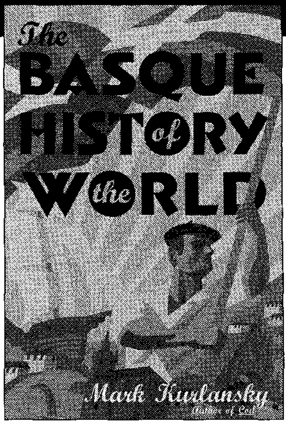

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• •

obtain information from Justice about the pyrotechnic devices. Caddell said that he had. Did Justice comply? Johnston asked. Caddell said that it had not.

Johnston decided to break his chain of command and go directly to the top. Last August, he wrote a letter to Reno, saying that somebody at Justice had to have known about the pyrotechnic devices. Johnston had seen some internal department memorandums of interviews for trial preparation, with notations that said "privileged" and "DOJ witness do not disclose." Johnston wrote:

> It appears that someone was making decisions about whether the plaintiffs in the civil case, or others, should have access to these documents. It is my own hypothesis that the Torts Branch has had these documents for years, and that they decided not to make them available to the plaintiffs. . . . Certainly, as attention focused in the past year on the fire issue, the full import of these documents must have been known to whomever possessed them.

But someone at Justice was taking the situation seriously, and that person apparently decided it was in the department's best interest to undermine Johnston. One day in August, Johnston received from the San Antonio office a facsimile of some notes, taken by a paralegal, which showed that Johnston had been present at an interview with a member of the F.B.I.'s Waco team in 1993, while he was preparing for the criminal trial against the Davidians. The notes included the phrase "attempt to penetrate bunker w/1 military and 2 ferret rounds." Johnston says he had no reason to understand what a military gas round was in 1993, but he completely understood why the notes had been sent to him now: it was someone's way of suggesting that he, too, stood to lose if the government was embarrassed. Several days later, the message was made even clearer, when Johnston learned that someone had leaked the old notes to the Dallas *Morning News*. An article quoted Blagg as saying that he couldn't think of a worse thing for a United States Attorney—Johnston, obviously—than to be discovered as having failed to reveal key information in a case.

In coming forward, Johnston may have done the right thing, but he had plainly made a bad career move. At a party, one of Blagg's assistants remarked to one of Johnston's that "Bill really fucked up" in his handling of the case. When the United States Attorneys in the central district of Texas held their quarterly meeting recently, Johnston was not invited.

For all its vast expanse, Texas can be a very small place. Johnston, himself the son of an esteemed Texas prosecutor, was held in high regard by people who mattered in central Texas, such as the Rangers' boss, Jim Francis. Johnston also had a warm relationship with Judge Smith—so close that after Smith saw him being interviewed on television he felt free to offer the younger man some grooming advice. (Always wear a coat and tie.) Smith didn't like much of what he was hearing about the Justice Department, and he was particularly displeased by its treatment of Johnston—enough to call the Attorney General about the matter. Reno took his call right away, and the Judge expressed his respect for Johnston's integrity, saying that he admired what Johnston had done, and that he hoped it wouldn't hurt him at the department. "I agree with you, Judge," Reno assured Smith. "He's a fine person. I certainly hope nothing negative is going to happen to him." A week later, the case was removed from Johnston's district.

But Judge Smith had the final word. On August 9th, he granted the Rangers' motion to be relieved of responsibility for the Davidian evidence. The Judge could have had the evidence transferred to another law-enforcement agency, such as the F.B.I., in which case the evidence would still have been under the control of the Justice Department. Instead, he ordered that it be delivered to him: not only the evidence in the Rangers' vault but all the material in the government's possession—every tape, photograph, document, and memorandum. And, perhaps thinking of Justice documents he'd seen that carried such notations as "do not disclose," on September 2nd he pointedly warned the government that "any party that destroys, alters or otherwise tampers with any evidence" would be held in contempt and punished. A few weeks later, the Ryder trucks were on the way to Waco.

At sunset, the Branch Davidian property, which spans seventy-seven acres outside Waco, is a weirdly beautiful sight, spectral but not dead. The brush is alive with fat brown Texas grasshoppers, noisy enough to suggest Biblical plagues. The Davidian litter still scattered about—one of Koresh's smashed motorcycles here, the rusted hulk of a school bus there—gives the place its haunted feel, but although Mount Carmel is not easy to get to, even at dusk there are tourists walking the grounds and snapping photographs.

Some people, not unlike Civil War

buffs who have combed Antietam Creek for souvenirs, claim to have found bullets on the site. Indeed, there are monuments and memorials all over Mount Carmel. Myrtle trees have been planted for each of the Davidian dead, and near the former site of the compound there is a stone marker engraved with a legend that reads like something from an alternative National Park Service:

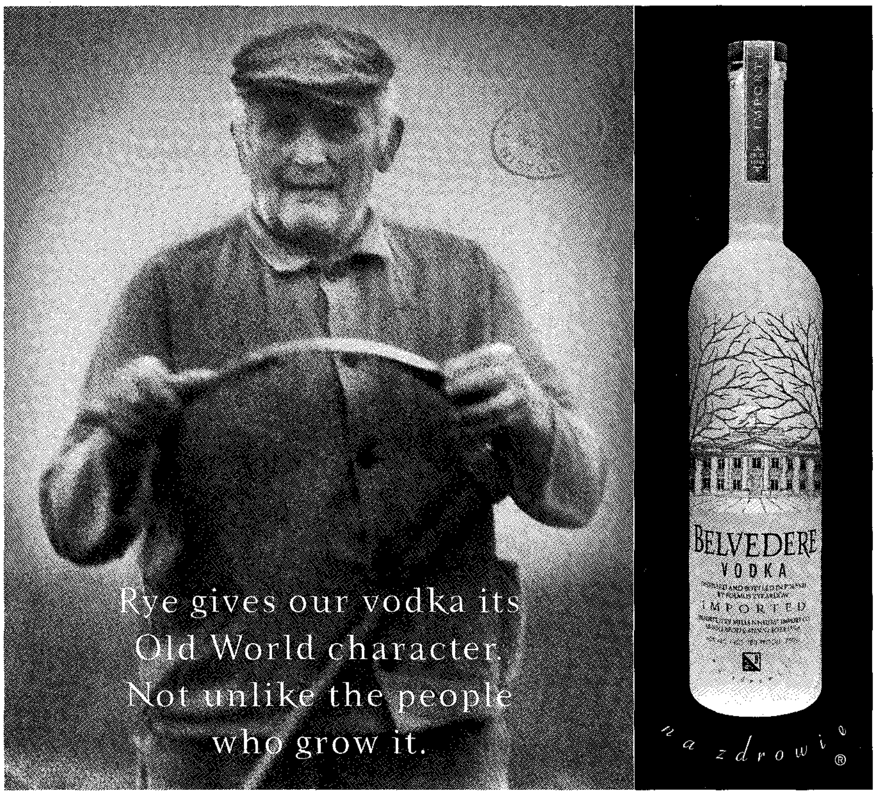
> On February 28, 1993, a church and its members known as Branch Davidians came under attack by ATF and FBI agents. For 51 days, the Davidians and their leader, David Koresh, stood proudly. On April 19, 1993 the Davidians and their church were burned to the ground. 82 people perished during the siege. 18 were children 10 years old or younger.

The memorial is not official, of course—it was placed by the Northeast Texas Regional Militia of Texarkana—but then nothing is really official at Mount Carmel, including a clear title of ownership. That issue is tied up in court.

This has not stopped an undertaking called the Phoenix Project, an ad-hoc effort to build a new church on the site of the old Davidian compound. The project members, who are volunteers, think of the Davidians as martyred victims of a government massacre. They work on Sundays, mostly, and after three weeks of mixing concrete by hand and digging with picks and shovels they laid the foundation for the new church. "And this is hard Texas ground, this is black clay," Jeffrey Ward, one of the volunteers, says.

Ward is a bantam former marine, who wears a camouflage shirt and a flop hat, and says that he is here on principle. "A church was burnt down. People were murdered. Not 'killed.' People were *murdered*. . . . People say, 'Not in America.' But look, this happened in America. It happened in America. Goll-*ee*, man! Guys with ski masks on—like Nazi Germany, the Gestapo—came and kicked down the door and shot up a bunch of women and children, with extreme prejudice."

For people with Ward's view of events, the F.B.I.'s admission about the pyrotechnic devices is confirmation of their darkest suspicions. "Maybe that's gonna wake somebody else up out there," Ward says. "It's the powers that be. It's that 'new world order' that the State Department is talking about all the time. Hey, even Kofi Annan said that they're not going to recognize national borders anymore—if they wanna send in peacekeeping



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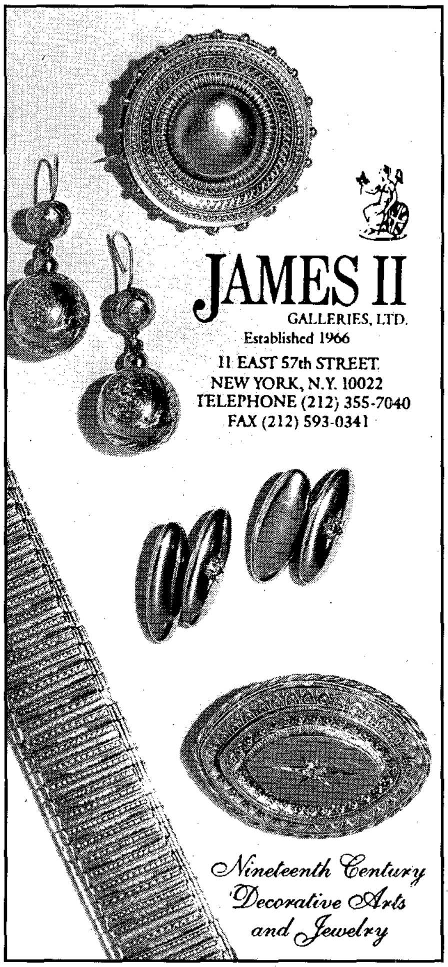

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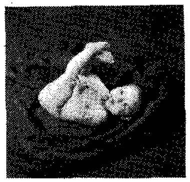

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troops, they're gonna send them in. Well, not on my watch. Not in my homeland."

John Danforth recently visited Mount Carmel, where he certainly could not have missed a huge sign that someone had posted. It says, "Senator Danforth, after three coverups called investigations, will you finally subpoena the evidence?" Danforth has already seen much of the evidence, including the most controversial: the tapes that, some insist, prove that federal agents repeatedly fired automatic weapons at the Davidians on the day of the fire.

In Houston, Danforth and his staff visited the law office of Michael Caddell. Danforth was there from 8:30 A.M. until 6 P.M., and spent a substantial portion of that time in a conference room that had been transformed into a high-tech screening room. Caddell had set up broadcast monitors and a thirty-five-inch plasma screen (which produces the clearest possible images), and Ed Allard, the infrared specialist, walked Danforth and his staff through the infrared surveillance video.

Any thermal-imaging infrared recording made during daylight provides a fuzzy image at best, because FLIR actually records contrasts in surface temperatures. A man going from an air-conditioned room into the heat of the sun, for example, would seem to disappear as his clothing reached the temperature of the ground surface. For that reason, the FLIR tapes that, according to some viewers, show F.B.I. gunfire are a bit like a video Rorschach test—the viewer tends to see what his mind is prepared to see. But Caddell has recently obtained from the F.B.I. a copy of the FLIR that is starkly more clear than the one widely seen by the public, and that is what Danforth and his staff saw. In lecture style, Allard, a former physics professor, ran a bit of the video for Danforth, stopped to explain the basics of thermal imagery, and then returned to the scene of what he believes is a pitched gun battle between Davidians and F.B.I. agents firing automatic weapons.

"I can look at students, and I can tell you if they're paying attention," Allard says. "The Danforth people were totally absorbed." Of one scene in the video, he says, "There's no question that's a full gun battle." As he recalls it, "What I did with the Danforth people is, I said to them, 'Look, why don't you count the fire yourself?' I played the tapes, frame by frame. And as you play them frame by frame the people say, 'I see one, two, three, four . . . I see five! No, I think there's four, run it back.' And pretty soon they say, 'Yeah, there's five shots from there, and there's one shot from the other side.' "

It is probably not good news for the F.B.I. that Danforth and his staff have been counting the F.B.I.'s putative automatic-gunfire shots at Waco. Significantly, although the F.B.I. still denies that it fired shots at the compound, the most recent denial included a slight qualification—that experts differ on what the FLIR shows. The F.B.I. says it has experts who back the bureau's contention that no shots were fired. However, an independent specialist in thermal imaging, Carlos Ghigliotti, viewed the F.B.I.'s FLIR tapes at F.B.I. headquarters, and concluded that shots had been fired. If the government is forced to confess another prevarication, the conspiracy fires will certainly flame higher.

The revived controversies over Waco can only intensify a broadening unease about the Justice Department's integrity, which has put the department on the defensive on several fronts. Besides the Waco issue, Congress is questioning Justice actions in the alleged Chinese appropriation of American nuclear secrets, the campaign-finance scandal of 1996, and, most recently, the department's role in securing clemency for jailed members of F.A.L.N., the radical Puerto Rican independence group.

Senator Fred Thompson, Republican of Tennessee, who first came before the public as a congressional counsel during the Watergate hearings, and was himself an Assistant United States Attorney for three years, talked about his former agency recently. "One of the things I've been most concerned about since I've been up here is what has happened to the department over there—the incompetence," Thompson said. "Some of it is baffling." He paused. "What I think we're witnessing is the beginning stages of incremental damage done to our last remaining institution, one that's been largely unassailed so far. The Presidency's been dragged down, the Congress has been dragged down, most of it self-inflicted. But our justice system has still remained pretty much respected. Controversial sometimes, but respected. And this is a part of that incremental damage, and it's serious." ♦

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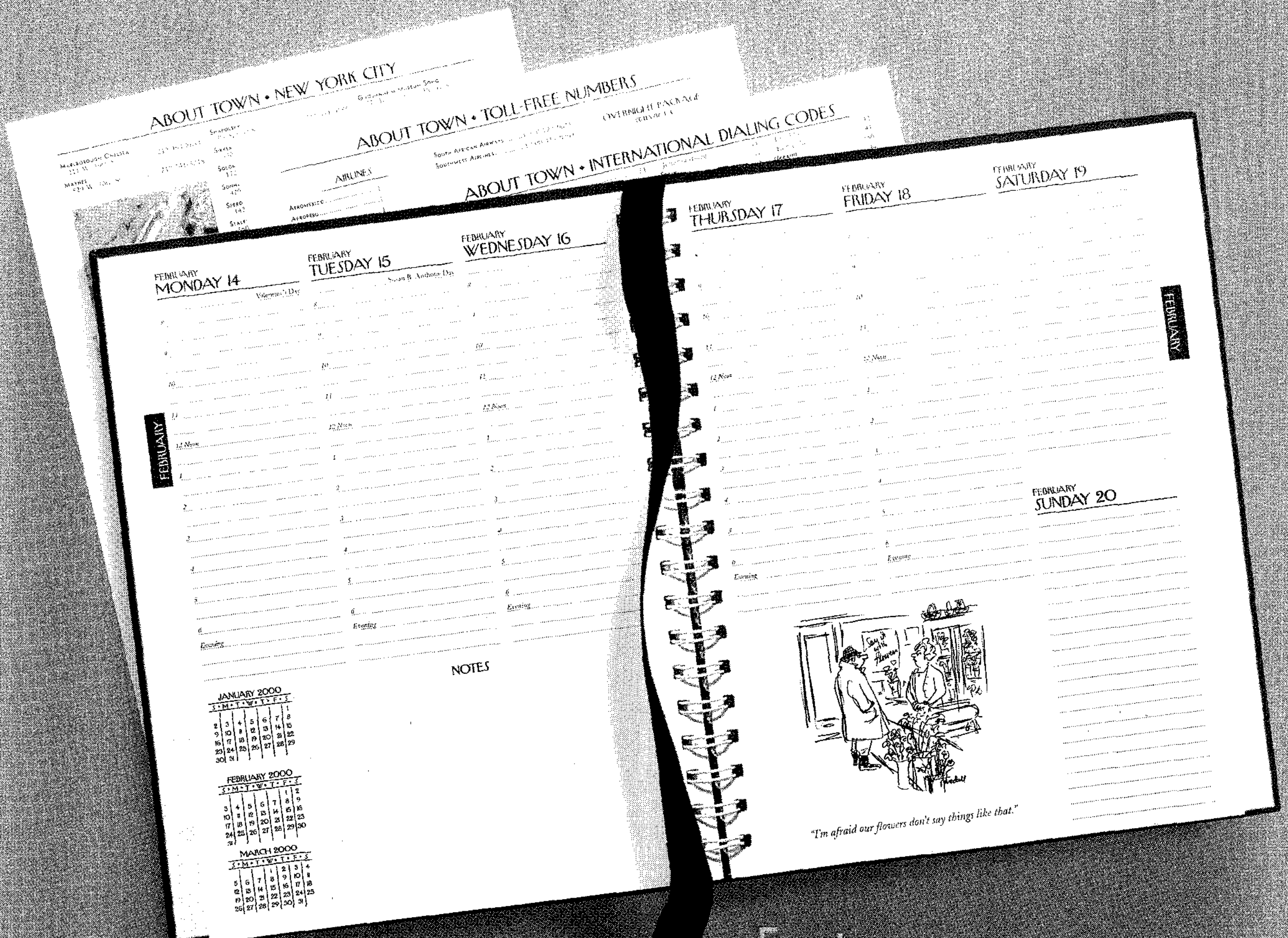
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A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE BURIAL

Winning multimillion-dollar verdicts had become easy for Willie Gary, and he began to want something bigger. Then he met a man with a complaint against a funeral-home empire.

BY JONATHAN HARR

ON the morning of September 12, 1995, a civil trial began in the Hinds County Circuit Court in Jackson, Mississippi. Like most lawsuits, especially those that fail to settle before trial, this case had a long and complicated history and antagonists who had become bitter enemies. The case was, at root, a contract dispute, similar to thousands that are filed in courts across the land each year, and in this respect it was unremarkable. Its outcome, however, caused consternation in circles far removed from Mississippi. That outcome was due in part to revelations that emerged during the trial about the nature of a hugely profitable industry, one that sooner or later enters the life of every human being. And it was also due in part to the skills of an unusual legal advocate.

I—LAWYER GARY

WILLIE EDWARD GARY graduated from North Carolina Central University law school in June, 1974. He was twenty-six years old, married, and had two sons—a four-year-old and an eleven-month-old. He and his wife, Gloria, packed up their belongings and, on July 1st, left their apartment in Raleigh. They drove sixteen hours to Stuart, Florida. He pulled up to the Raintree Run Apartments, in Stuart, around midmorning and went into the manager's office to get the key to a two-bedroom apartment that he had rented in a series of transactions by telephone and through the mail.

In Willie Gary's recollection, the woman seated behind the desk looked at him curiously and asked him to wait a moment. She got up and went into another office, shutting the door behind her. When she returned, she said, "I'm sorry, we don't have any vacant apartments."

Willie Gary showed the woman the receipt for the deposit he had sent. He showed her the correspondence he had received—paperwork concerning all the terms of tenancy, down even to the use of the swimming pool.

The woman said, "I'm very sorry, but we just don't have any units available now."

Willie Gary said to the woman, "I talked to you about hooking up the gas and electricity. Don't you remember that? And now you're telling me you don't have an apartment?"

From the back office, a man emerged. Willie Gary explained the circumstances again. "My wife and two young children are out in the car," he said. "We've got no place to go."

The man said, "I'm sorry, sir. We don't have an apartment."

Willie Gary said, "You can keep me out. That's O.K. But I want you to know that I just graduated from law school, and I'm going to sue you to kingdom come. I contracted with you, and it's clear that you don't want me here because my face is black."

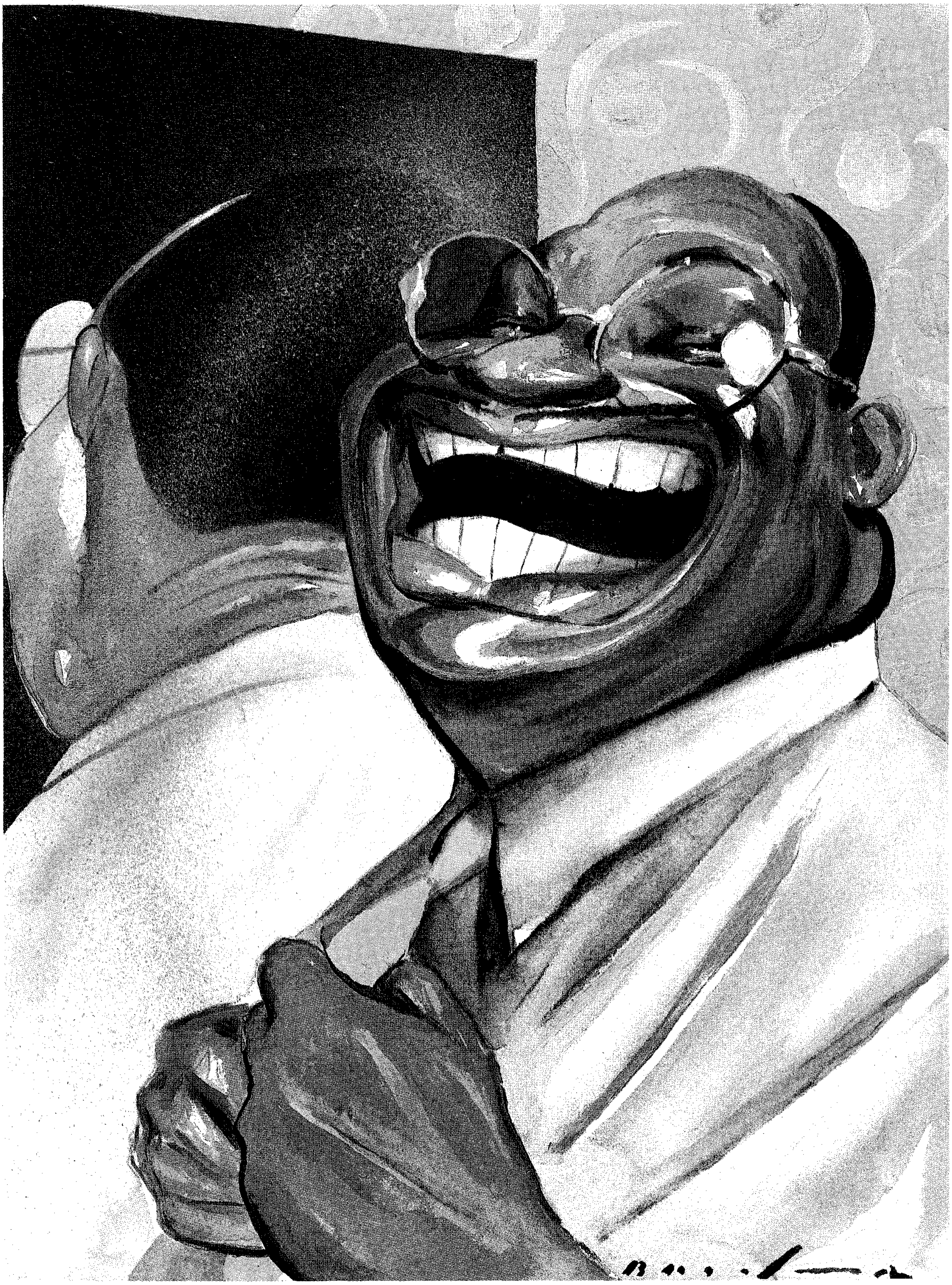
Willie Gary turned and walked out to the car, where his wife and sons were waiting for him. He stood by the car, taut with anger, explaining the circumstances to his wife. As they debated what to do next, the man appeared at the door and called out his name.

Within an hour, Willie Gary had the keys to the apartment, the same apartment that he had confirmed in the contract. The Gary family was one of the first black families to live in Raintree Run Apartments.

WILLIE GARY long ago departed the Raintree Run, but he finds himself on occasion driving by the apartment complex. He currently drives a blue Bentley, one of two Bentleys that he recently bought. He owns several other cars, among them a Mercedes-Benz, but Mercedes-Benzes are commonplace in the affluent and mostly white enclave of Stuart, and Willie Gary prefers that people take notice of his presence.

People's taking notice serves him both professionally and personally. He makes his living as a personal-injury lawyer, and many personal-injury lawyers tend to advertise their success to potential clients by the cars they drive, the clothes they wear, and the heavily jewelled watches that adorn their wrists. Willie Gary wears three-thousand-dollar suits and a diamond-encrusted Rolex. He has cases pending in forty-two states. He is away from home approximately twenty days of every month. He travels in his own plane, a Gulfstream II executive jet that he has named Wings of Justice. He has two offices in Florida, one in Stuart, the other in Fort Pierce. The larger of the two, the office in Stuart, occupies the former Pelican Hotel, a grand hacienda-style edifice that overlooks the Saint Lucie River. He has smaller offices in Texas, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Twenty-seven lawyers work for him, along with a staff of a hundred and twelve, which includes paralegals, secretaries, receptionists, accountants, stenographers, clerks, messengers, janitors, groundskeepers, four private detec-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY STEVE BRODNER



Gary tells every jury, "If I just talk in plain ordinary talk about what happened, you won't hold that against me, will you?"

tives, three pilots, and an aviation mechanic. Because many of his cases concern claims of medical malpractice, he also employs five nurses and a doctor.

Willie Gary stands five feet seven inches tall. He is fifty-two years old and thickly built across the shoulders, stout in the torso, and well muscled in all his limbs. He walks with a distinctly pigeon-toed gait. His skin, which has a rich, dark-brown sheen, radiates health. He has a deep and resonant voice that carries well in courtrooms and from pulpits. In middle age, he wears his hair cropped close to his scalp, although as a young man he wore it variously in an Afro and a flattop—a three-inch-high topiary of a flattop, according to those who knew him back then—so that he would appear taller. He arrived at college, at Shaw University, in Raleigh, unbidden and without an application on file, in the hope of winning a football scholarship. He sported the flattop and wore platform shoes. In this ensemble, he appeared nearly six feet tall. The football players all called him Shorty.

It was not vanity or lack of confidence that caused him to elongate himself. He has rarely, it seems, suffered a want of confidence. The story of his life, which he has told on many occasions, with various embellishments and abridgments, with and without conscious exaggeration, has acquired, in its repetition, the contours of legend. Some facts, however, are verifiable.

He was born a twin on July 12, 1947, on a farm near Eastman, Georgia, to Mary and Turner Gary. His birth was, by all accounts, a difficult one. His twin did not survive, and he and his mother required hospitalization. The medical bills forced Turner Gary to sell his farm. The family moved to the town of Canal Point, Florida, on the shores of Lake Okeechobee. Willie Gary, who was the sixth of eleven children, spent much of his early childhood in a whitewashed three-room shack with a tar-paper roof and no electricity or plumbing. The shack stood until a few years ago, in a state of advanced decay, overgrown with vines and palmetto trees.

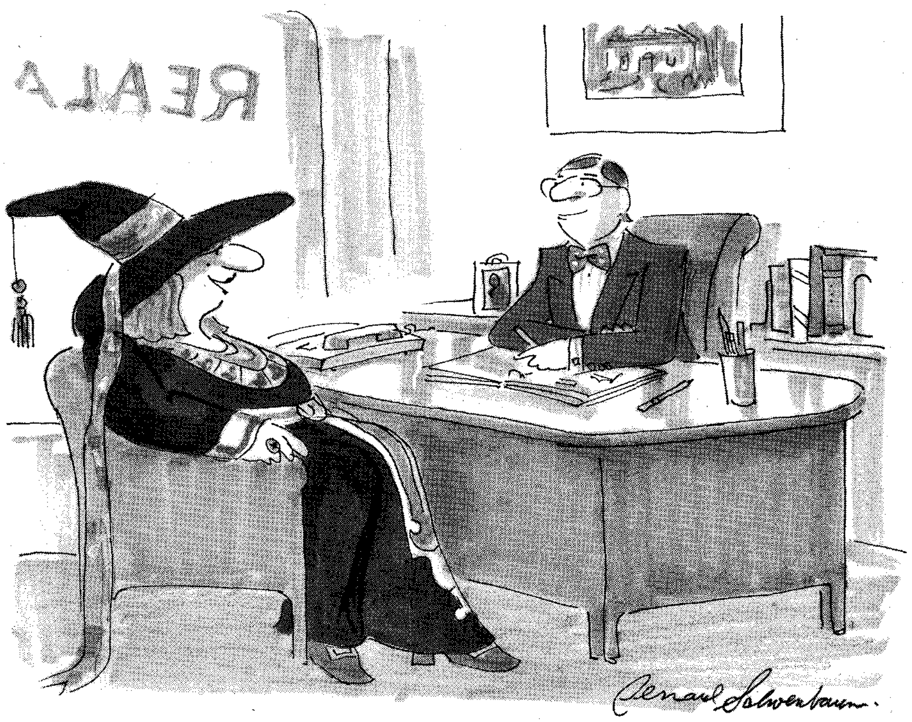
Turner Gary had only a second-grade education. He supported his family by working in the cane fields and, later, when the family moved north, to Indiantown, in the bean fields. In June, he would nail shut the windows and doors of the shack, and the Gary family would travel with other migrants to camps in the Carolinas. They would return in November, after the apple harvest, just as the winter crops were coming ripe in Florida. When the Gary children grew old enough to work, they joined their father and siblings in the fields. Willie Gary began in 1952, at the age of five, carrying water and food to his family and other field workers. Turner Gary had an enterprising mind. By the mid-nineteen-fifties, he had acquired an old delivery truck, cut a panel out of the side, and outfitted it with a gas burner. He made sandwiches and soups and carried cold drinks in a cooler, which he sold to the field workers at lunch. Willie Gary served as his primary assistant.

By the time Willie was ten, he was an experienced picker of sweet corn, string beans, celery, cabbage, and apples. Like other migrant children in the Carolinas, he went to school for half a day, in the morning. At noon, a bus would pick up the children at school and take them directly to the fields. Back in Florida, he attended school for a full day, except during the height of the various picking seasons, when he'd frequently miss a day or two each week to work in the fields.

The year that Willie Gary entered high school, in 1961, he returned to Florida in early September rather than in November, so that he could try out for the football team. He made the team as a linebacker. The following year, Mary Gary and the youngest of the children stopped travelling north to the fields, and by 1964 Turner Gary had also quit the migrant trail. The family still subsisted by working in the Florida cabbage fields and cornfields, and also by growing their own crops on a small plot of land.

During high school, Willie Gary started a lawnmowing and yard-cleaning service aimed at the families of Indiantown. He talked the owner of Stuart Feed Supply into allowing him to buy a lawnmower on credit. He made his lawnmower payments faithfully. "I paid every dime on time. My daddy always told me, 'Pay your bills on time. Even if you can't eat, pay your bills, or explain why you can't.'" He negotiated a deal for a second lawnmower and hired high-school friends to cut grass while he contracted with clients.

He was not an exceptional student. He was, however, an energetic football player. He overcame his modest physical skills and diminutive size by application of energy and a will to succeed. In his senior year, he made the Treasure Coast Conference team and won an invitation to try out for a football scholar-



"I'm looking for a nice cottage in a wooded area that would appeal to children in the four-to-seven age group."

ship at Bethune-Cookman, a small black college in Daytona. By his own account, he was the first boy from Indiantown to go off to college, and his departure was cause for celebration.

He arrived at Bethune-Cookman in August for three weeks of training camp. The coach, Jack McClairen, had played professionally for the Pittsburgh Steelers. At the end of each day's practice, Coach McClairen would call out the names of those boys who had failed to make the cut. Back then, in 1966, failing to make the cut meant failing to get the scholarship. On the last day of the training camp, a Friday in early September, McClairen summoned Willie Gary to his office. McClairen still remembers Willie Gary today. "He was a small youngster, a marginal athlete. He didn't fit into what we needed at that time." And this is what McClairen told Willie Gary, who wept openly. He said that he would mow the field, clean the locker room, and wash uniforms if he could keep the scholarship. McClairen has no specific recollection of this moment, but he does not doubt Willie Gary's account. "A lot of them would say, 'This is the only way for me to get an education, I'm the first in my family to go to college.' They'd just break down and start crying. It was the most difficult part of my duties. It makes you feel like a dog."

Willie Gary returned to Indiantown by bus that Friday night. The next morning, he called his high-school coach, Lewis Rice, and told him what had happened. Rice said to Willie Gary, "You got discriminated against because you're a little guy. Jack McClairen don't like little guys." Rice said he would call Coach Dennis Jefferson, at Shaw University, in Raleigh, on Monday morning. He knew Jefferson personally. "He's a small guy, used to be a quarterback," Rice said.

On Sunday morning, Willie Gary told his mother he was leaving for Raleigh that day. He and his girlfriend, Gloria Royal, packed his suitcase. He caught a Greyhound bus by the side of the road. He arrived in Raleigh at dawn on Monday, with thirteen dollars in his pocket. He walked two miles to Shaw University, where he got directions to Coach Jefferson's office. He stood outside the coach's door for what seemed a long time, waiting for an audience. "Those coaches," he recalled later in life, "they were mean just for nothing." Finally, the coach asked him what he wanted.

"I'm here to try out for a scholarship," he said. "Coach Lewis Rice called about me."

Coach Jefferson said, "I haven't got a call about you. We've got a hundred players here trying out. You don't even have an application on file. You've got to go home."

Willie Gary told Coach Jefferson that he didn't have enough money to get back home.

The coach advised him to call home and get the money. "We just can't have you here. I can't be responsible for you."

Willie Gary went directly to the admissions office, where he filled out an application. The dean of admissions, Dr. Fleming, waived the ten-dollar application fee but told him he would need a copy of his high-school transcript. Willie Gary put in a collect call to his high school. The high-school secretary, Mrs. Dixon, accepted the call. "I'll never forget that lady for doing that," Willie Gary said many years later. Mrs. Dixon put a copy of the transcript in the mail that day.

He found his way to Tupper Memorial Hall, the football players' dormitory. He met Jimmie Young, who today teaches high school in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and Walter Johnson, from Melbourne, Florida. They brought him food that evening from the cafeteria. He slept on a sofa in the dorm lounge.

Early the next morning, he went back to the gym and began cleaning up the locker room. Years afterward, in his middle age, he would become fond of recalling his father's many maxims for negotiating one's way through life: "My daddy always said, 'If you want a job, start working for nothing. They'll end up paying you.' I guess it doesn't take a genius to figure that out, but a whole lot of people haven't figured it out yet."

On Wednesday morning, the assistant coach came upon Willie Gary cleaning up the locker room. He asked him who he was and what he was doing in the locker room. The boy told him his story. The assistant coach said, "Man, you really want to go to school, don't you?"

Walking across the campus that afternoon, Willie Gary encountered Coach Jefferson, whom he had been diligently trying to avoid. The coach asked if he'd got the money to go home. Willie Gary said he was still waiting for it. Coach Jefferson gave him a meal card that was good until Friday. "By then, you better have your money," the coach said. "Meanwhile, help the trainer carry the stuff out to the football field."

At practice on Friday afternoon, Willie Gary was standing on the sidelines, watching the scrimmage, when one of the players was hurt. The coach said to Willie Gary, "Baby, it's time to see what you can do." He put on the pads, a helmet, and a jersey several sizes too big for him, and went onto the field. He recalls that on the first play he penetrated the offensive line, evading a trio of guards, and got to the quarterback. He further recalls that he blocked two punts that afternoon.

Willie Gary made the Shaw University football team and received a scholarship. From the beginning, it was his habit to lead the players in prayer and in the team's fight songs. In his junior year, his teammates elected him captain.

He decided to major in business administration. During his first year of college, he took remedial courses, as did most of the football players. In August, before the start of his second year, he married Gloria Royal, his girlfriend from Indiantown. She was the seventh of eleven children. Her father and his had trucked together on the migrant route to the Carolinas. In her first specific memory of him, at age five, on a summer day in Hendersonville, she and her older sister came across him changing the diaper of his brother Freddie and laughed at him. In his first vivid memory of her, in the second grade, he was elected, along with Diane Jones and John Henry Rivers, to deliver a fruit basket to her at home, the custom in Indiantown when someone missed school because of illness. During his first year at Shaw, he received as many as four letters a day from her.

They moved into a small apartment near the campus. Gloria, who had attended a junior college in Florida and was a diligent student, enrolled at Shaw and tutored her husband and the other football players. To make ends meet, Willie Gary waited on tables and worked

"It's been a perfect evening—why ruin it with aggravated assault?"

as a short-order cook. Then he began another landscaping business, renting equipment and hiring his teammates as laborers. He called his business Gary's Home Beautification Service and advertised in the quick-reference section of the Raleigh paper. By his third year of college, with more business than he could handle, he hired a manager. He made enough money to buy a new Camaro, with an eight-track. Coming upon a billboard announcing the construction of a five-hundred-home trailer park, he went to the builder, an Orlando construction company, and offered his services as a landscaper. He said he would grade, clear rocks, seed, and plant shrubbery for a hundred and seventy-five dollars per trailer home. Then he bid out the job for seventy-five dollars per yard. He cleared fifty thousand dollars. His teammates called him Little Boss Man. One of them, Jimmie Young, recalls, "We ragged him, but he was doing stuff you wouldn't believe. He was making more money than the college professors."

Willie Gary was subsequently accepted at North Carolina Central University law school, in Durham. In his first year, he got one A, several C's, and a D, in criminal law. He knew he was no scholar. Without his football teammates around him, he felt, he said, like "the country bumpkin," but he sat in the front row of every class and applied himself to his studies more strenuously than he ever had at Shaw. Once, in a law-school exercise, he gave a closing argument in a case that concerned minor damages arising out of a hypothetical auto collision. The first words out of his mouth were "Members of the jury, I'm going to ask you for one million dollars." The other students gasped, and then laughed. Undeterred, he said, "Why do I ask you for one million dollars? Because the Constitution says I can." He felt no self-consciousness talking in front of groups. "I was used to standing in front of people in church, praying and singing." He missed only two classes in three years of law school, and yet he also kept his landscaping business going to pay tuition and to support his wife and children.

When Willie and Gloria moved back to Florida, to the Raintree Run Apartments, in Stuart, he set himself to studying for the bar exam. He'd heard that ninety-seven per cent of black law-school graduates who took the Florida bar exam—a two-day ordeal—failed on their first attempt, and that most failed on their second, third, and fourth attempts. He'd heard stories of black law-school students who had graduated cum laude failing repeatedly.

He studied eighteen hours a day. In October, after lengthy prayer with Gloria, he went to Jacksonville to take the exam. He left feeling he'd genuinely done well. While awaiting the results, he began looking in earnest for a job as a clerk or paralegal. Lacking an introduction, he went door to door to each local law firm in turn. All these firms were run by white lawyers, and usually Willie Gary did not make it any further than the receptionist's desk. He finally found his way to the Office of the Public Defender in Stuart, where Elton Schwarz, the head of the office, granted him an interview. Many years later, Schwarz recalled being impressed by Willie Gary. "He had a drive to succeed. I knew his parents couldn't have financed an education. He had to have worked his way through law school." Schwarz told Willie Gary he had no money in the budget to hire a new lawyer, even though he needed one. His office covered a four-county area, and he had only four lawyers. "If I had the money, I'd give you a job," Schwarz said.

Willie Gary said he would work for nothing. Schwarz, astonished by this offer, managed to come up with twenty-five dollars a week in token pay, and told him, "If I get additional funding, you can have a job."

In his first week, Willie Gary accompanied Schwarz to the Saint Lucie county jail, where a man named Levis Leon Aldridge was awaiting trial for first-degree murder. Aldridge was accused of killing the manager of a local restaurant, where he had once worked as a dishwasher, in the course of a holdup. Aldridge, who was white, had grown up in a tar-paper shack in Missouri and picked cotton. He had no previous history of violent crime, but now he faced the death penalty. When he saw Willie Gary, Aldridge said to Schwarz, "Who's the kid?"

Schwarz introduced them.

"You a lawyer?" Aldridge asked.

"No, sir," said Willie Gary, "but I'm going to be one."

For reasons that neither Schwarz nor Willie Gary ever fathomed, Aldridge took a liking to Willie Gary. "It was very unusual," Schwarz recalled. Just before Aldridge's second appearance before the judge, Schwarz told Willie Gary, "Leon wants you there."

"What do I say in the courtroom?" Willie Gary asked.

"Nothing," said Schwarz. "Leon just wants you there."

In the courtroom, Aldridge was brought out in manacles and chains. The judge asked if the defendant was prepared to enter a plea. Schwarz stood up. "My client wants—"

Aldridge brought both manacled fists down on the table. "I want Willie Gary to represent me," he said.

Willie Gary, of course, had not yet passed the bar and thus could not address the court on behalf of Aldridge. But as they left the courtroom that day Schwarz said to him, "You just hitched on to your first murder-one case."

Some weeks later, on November 20th—Willie Gary recalls the date precisely—Schwarz stopped at the cubbyhole where Willie Gary worked. "The results of the bar exam come out today," Schwarz said. "Do you want me to call and get your score?"

"No way," Willie Gary replied. "If I'm going to get hurt, I want to open that envelope real slow."

Schwarz went into his office and called for the bar-exam results anyway. He returned to Willie Gary and said, "I called them, Willie. You passed."

Willie tried to reach Gloria at work, in Belle Glade, but she'd already left for home. He got in his car and drove toward Belle Glade, hoping to meet her on the highway. When he saw her car, he flagged her down and shouted out his window, "Baby, I passed, I passed!" By the side of the road, they hugged and cried.

Willie Gary's formal admission to the Florida bar, on December 20, 1974, was cause for celebration in Indiantown. He was regarded by many of the townsfolk with an awe that bordered on reverence. When he came home to visit his parents, he would sit on the sofa in the living room and a crowd would gather around and hang on every word he uttered. In the way that people customarily addressed a medical doctor, the people of Indiantown addressed him as Lawyer Gary.

THE capital-murder trial of Levis Leon Aldridge began on January 6, 1975. Elton Schwarz, who had just weeks earlier completed another capital-murder case, begged for a continuance, on the ground that defense counsel was unprepared. The judge rejected the plea, and the trial went forward. It lasted only three days. Aldridge maintained his innocence throughout, but the evidence against him was compelling.

Elton Schwarz conducted the examinations of the witnesses, but he did not feel sanguine about the outcome. Aldridge wanted Willie Gary to address the jury on his behalf, and Schwarz, who would speak last to the jury, agreed. Willie Gary recalls that Schwarz said to him, "You got Leon to listen to you. I know you can get the jury to listen."

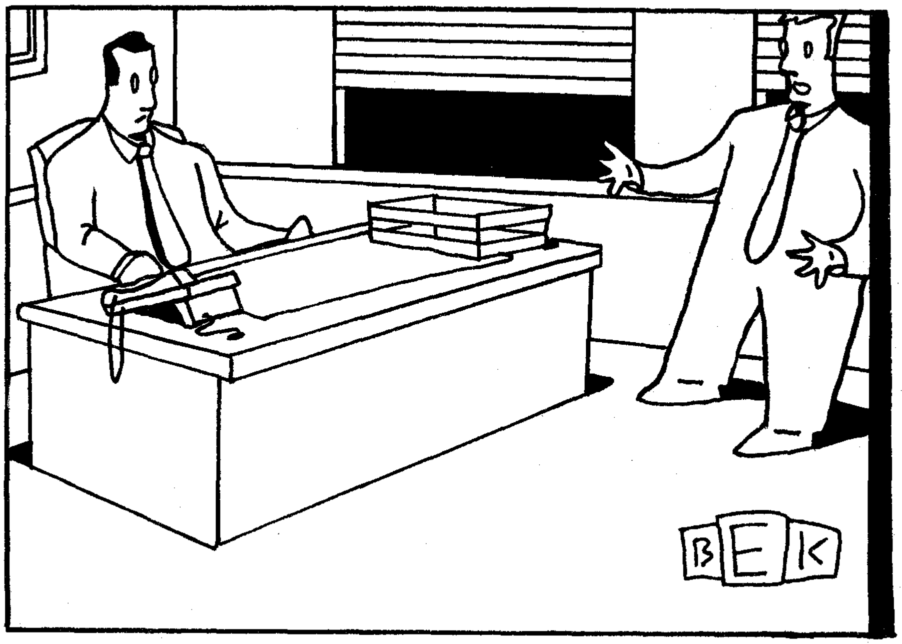
So it was that a freshly minted lawyer, a member of the bar for only three weeks, addressed the jury in the first real case of his life, a capital-murder trial. In Willie Gary's memory, his plea to the jury was "one hell of a closing argument" that kept the jurors "deliberating for hours and hours." In truth, the transcript reveals only a competent, workmanlike argument. It was brief—Willie Gary had only thirty minutes allotted to him—but not unskillful in its dissection of the credibility of the prosecution's two main witnesses. And the jurors did deliberate for two hours, although that is not very long in a death-penalty case. When Willie Gary recounted this tale of his first trial, he omitted the crucial part, leaving the listener to ask, "So what happened to Aldridge?"

"He's on death row," Willie Gary replied. "If he hasn't been executed yet."

Aldridge has not been executed, and he is no longer on death row. Also omitted from Willie Gary's telling is Aldridge's appeal, on the ground that his lawyers had provided ineffective counsel, that a mere legal intern—Willie Gary—had prepared his case-in-chief. To save Aldridge from the death penalty, both Willie Gary and Elton Schwarz testified on his behalf, asserting that they had expected the judge to grant a thirty-day continuance and that they had indeed been unprepared for trial. Aldridge's appeal, rejected by the Florida Supreme Court, finally resulted in a retrial and a life sentence.

THE day after the trial, Elton Schwarz called Willie Gary into his office. The budget for the Public Defender's Office, he said, had been reduced rather than increased, and he could not offer Willie Gary a job.

Willie Gary decided to start his own law firm. He and Gloria, with their life savings of fifteen hundred dollars, began looking for an office in Stuart. They



"I think you'll like this idea—it's sort of 'dull' meets 'inoffensive.'"

found a storefront on Colorado Avenue. It had a soiled pink carpet and grimy walls in need of paint. Together, they spent a week scrubbing the place. The other occupants of the shopping strip objected to Willie Gary's presence. They thought his law office would attract vagrants and criminals.

Willie Gary opened his door for business on January 17, 1975. His first client was a woman named Bessie Lewis, who wanted to deed some property to one of her daughters. It was a simple matter for which Willie Gary, on the advice of another lawyer in town, charged four hundred dollars. His conscience ate at him. He tried to return some of Bessie Lewis's money, but she refused it. He committed to representing her free for the rest of her life. That, too, proved to be a mistake, of another kind. When Bessie Lewis was overcharged three dollars on her light bill, she called on Lawyer Gary to rectify matters. When her Sears washing machine broke down, it was Lawyer Gary who examined the warranty and set matters straight.

In his first year of business, Willie Gary dealt with small matters criminal and domestic. In his second year, he represented the widow of a truck driver who had died in an accident in Palatka, Florida, near the Georgia border. The court records have been destroyed, but the case is still vivid in Willie Gary's memory. The truck driver, Charlie Hayes, who was black, had swerved to avoid crushing the car of an elderly white lady, Mrs. Ella Dancy, who had gone through a stop sign. Charlie Hayes's truck went off the road and into a barn, where Hayes was decapitated by falling timber. Palatka was in Putnam County, which had a long and ugly history of Ku Klux Klan activity. Willie Gary figured that he needed to settle the case. He asked for thirty-five thousand dollars. The insurance-company lawyer who represented Ella Dancy offered twenty thousand dollars. The case was put on the trial calendar. Having read in books on trial practice that a lawyer should get to know his client, Willie Gary took a bus to North Carolina to visit Charlie Hayes's widow. On a rainy afternoon, they sat on the front porch together, overlooking a small plot of land that Charlie Hayes had farmed. It was choked with weeds. There was a leak in the roof, under which Mrs. Hayes had put a bucket. "If Charlie was here, he'd fix it," Mrs. Hayes told him.

Willie Gary tried the case before an all-white jury. He survived the defense motion for a directed verdict. In the closing argument, he recalls saying to the jurors, "I was told that Mrs. Hayes couldn't get a fair trial in this county. Maybe I'm naïve, but when you raised your hand and swore you'd render a fair verdict I believed in you."

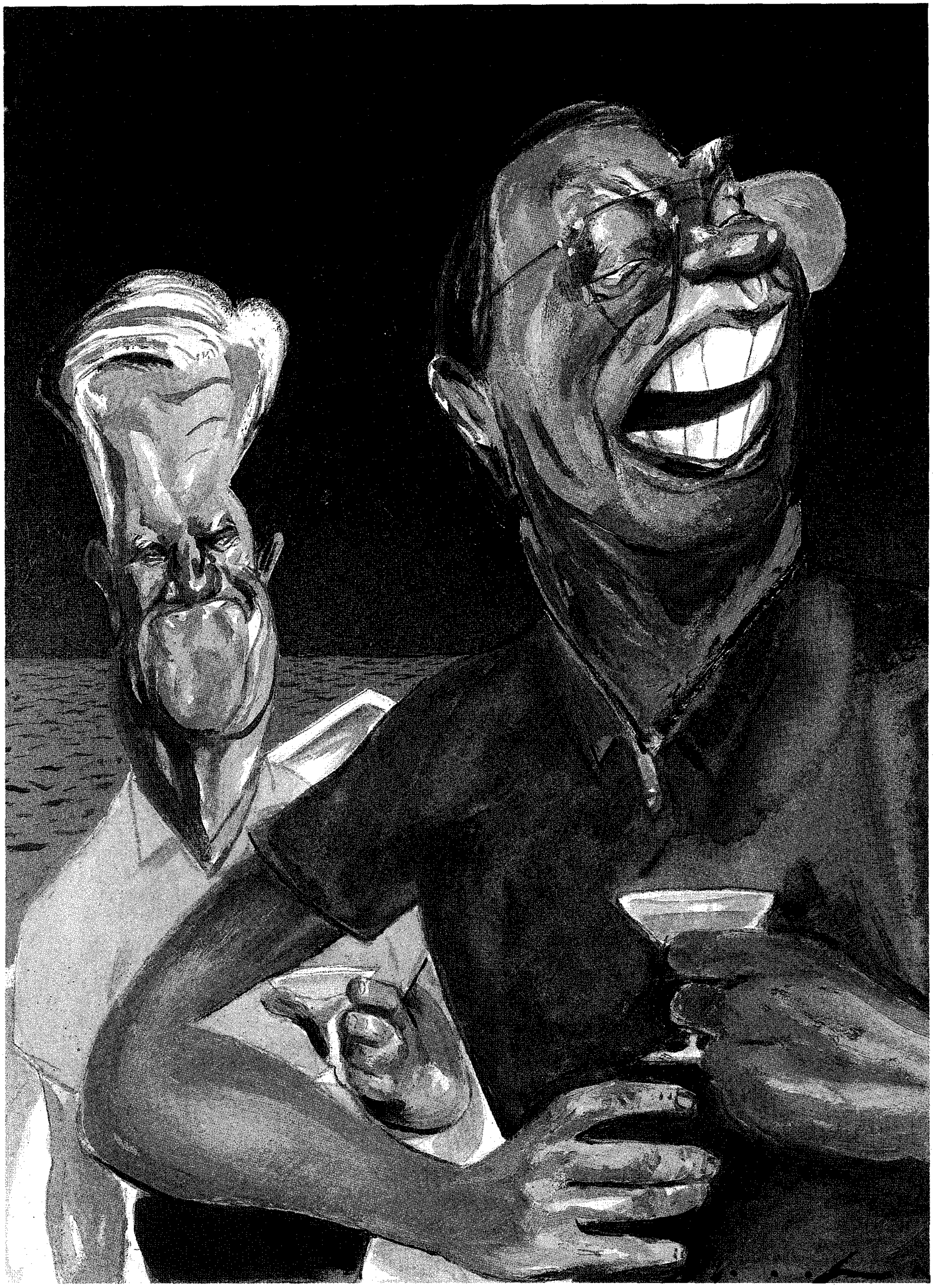
And then he described the day he'd spent with Mrs. Hayes. "I can tell you about the grass in the field that hasn't been mowed, and the leak in the roof that hasn't been fixed, because Charlie's not around to take care of these things. But I can't tell you what Mrs. Hayes feels. The only thing I can tell you is that when I was sitting with her on the front porch she heard a truck blow its horn out in the distance. She said, 'Lawyer Gary, that's my Charlie now. He's coming home.' I said to her, 'No, that's not Charlie. He's not coming home again.' "

In his telling, it is at this point that he saw a woman on the jury take a handkerchief from her purse and dab her eyes. "Don't give us charity," he recalls saying to the jurors. "Just do what's right." He suggested that two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars was about right in this instance. When the jury returned its verdict, it was, he says, "to the penny" what he had asked for.

The case helped establish Willie Gary's reputation locally, and it also established in his mind a desire to concentrate his practice on personal-injury law. He began getting referrals from other lawyers. His business grew. He moved to a larger office and took on a partner, and then another. For a time, he aimed at building the biggest black law firm in the nation, even though, as it turned out, he had more white clients than black. In a contract case, he sought the help of a retired white lawyer, a former city and school-board attorney from Michigan, who had come to Florida to fish and sail. They formed a friendship, and they prevailed in the contract case. Two weeks later, Willie Gary invited this lawyer, whose name was Robert Parenti, to join his firm. Parenti, on brief consideration, decided that working with Willie Gary might prove more fun than full-time fishing and sailing.

In his second year as a lawyer, Willie Gary negotiated his first million-dollar settlement. In the years that followed, he asked juries on many occasions for million-dollar verdicts, but he did not win his first million-dollar jury verdict—the trial lawyer's benchmark of success—until 1984. The next year, in a case against Florida Power & Light involving the electrocution deaths of seven family members, he negotiated a settlement of more than forty million dollars. After that, big cases seemed to arrive almost routinely at his office. Willie Gary's office keeps a roster of his biggest cases and their awards. Against a Florida hospital, in the misdiagnosis of a seven-month-old girl with meningitis, and the alleged alteration of medical records: $17.7 million. Against an Atlanta hospital, in a circumcision procedure that severely burned the penis of a one-day-old boy: $22.8 million. Against an osteopath and the Chicago Board of Education, in the paralysis of a high-school football player: $3.95 million. Against a Coca-Cola bottler, in the brain damage of a two-year-old boy hit by a company van: $8 million. By 1996, Willie Gary had accumulated nearly sixty settlements or verdicts of a million dollars or more.

Nowadays, lawyers and investigators on his staff prepare most cases. The firm's monthly calendar lists, on average, thirty cases in various stages of mediation, settlement, and trial. In December, 1996, for example, the calendar contained cases in Ohio, Georgia, Mississippi, Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida. Gary becomes personally involved, as a rule, when a case is ready for trial or settlement. The vast majority of all civil claims settle before trial, but he has tried as many as seven cases in a year. During trial, he begins his mornings by listening to gospel music at a volume just short of deafening. As he dresses, he sings along to the Mighty Clouds of Joy or the Gospel Warriors, pausing occasionally to shadowbox. He wears hand-tailored shirts and gold cufflinks, but he does not wear his bejewelled Rolex in front of jurors. Before heading off to the courtroom, he gathers his trial team—the lawyers, the expert witnesses, the secretaries, the clients—in a circle, and all hold hands as he prays for divine guidance and vic-

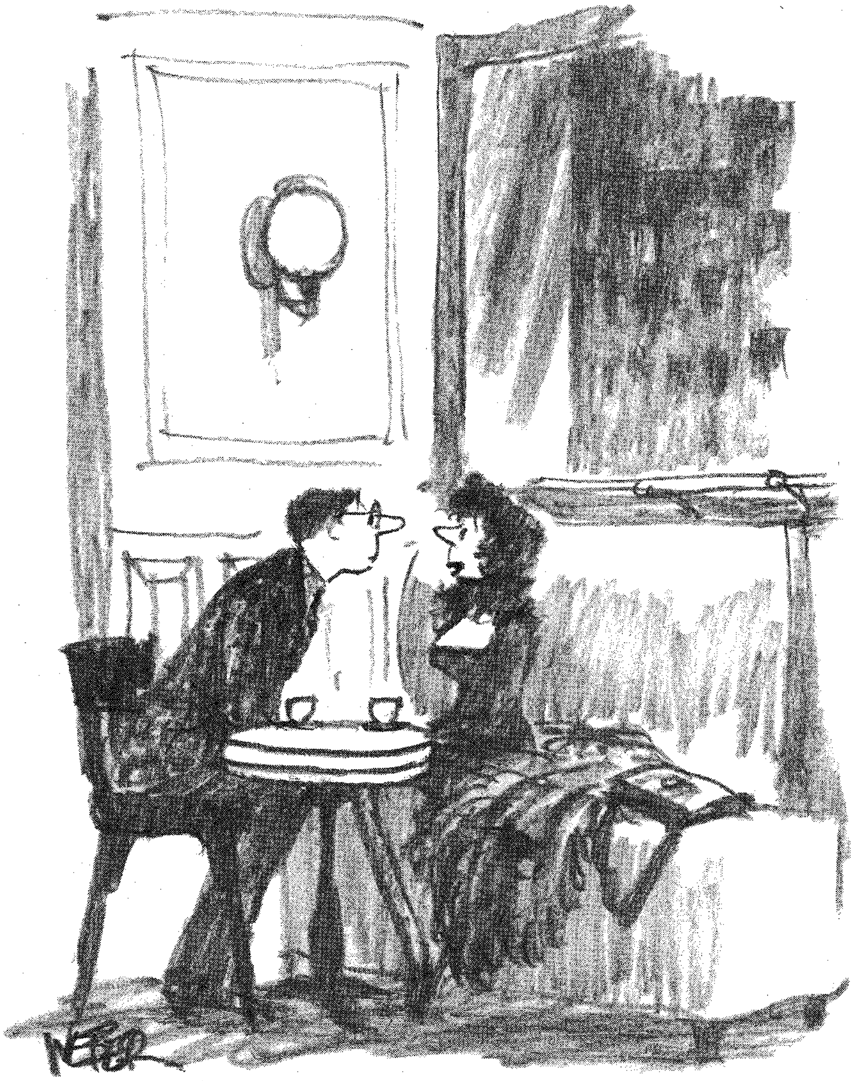


Loewen courted potential funeral-home acquisitions—and met with Jeremiah O'Keefe—on his hundred-and-ten-foot yacht.

tory. Like many trial lawyers, he has superstitions. Walking to the courthouse, no member of the team may cross to the other side of the street, or deviate around a lamppost, or ascend a flight of stairs on the opposite side of a railing. He keeps an eagle eye out for infractions, and if he spies one the offender must retrace his steps.

He begins every trial by telling jurors that he would like to keep things simple. "I'm just a country boy," he says. "If I just talk in plain ordinary talk about what happened, you won't hold that against me, will you?" Eloquence in the classic oratorical sense holds little appeal for him. His presentation is sometimes repetitive, occasionally erratic. His verb tenses often do not match. Sometimes he omits verbs altogether. He uses double negatives. He refers in openings and closings to at least one of his father's homilies, of which he has an apparently inexhaustible supply. He lapses now and then, when it suits his purpose, into the cadences of the pulpit. His voice fills a courtroom. His presence fills the courtroom, too. A white lawyer whose case he once took over at the behest of the client, and who was therefore not particularly well disposed toward him, said about him, "He acts like he's the most important guy in the world. The thing is he makes everybody else around him feel important, too. That's his genius."

He has never smoked, and he does not drink alcohol. In his entire life, he can recall only once having had a sip of champagne. He has given large sums of money to religious, educational, and charitable institutions. In 1991, for example, he pledged ten million dollars to Shaw University, which was then near bankruptcy, and led a drive that raised another seventeen million dollars. His great indulgence is lavish spending, and in this he can match the excess of any corporate mandarin. The interior of his Gulfstream jet, for example, is outfitted with 18k. gold fixtures. The newest of his two homes, a Mediterranean-style villa on the Saint Lucie River at Sewall's Point, has some forty rooms and twelve bathrooms, a gym, and a movie theatre. He employs three full-time staff people to care for the house, although Gloria, at her own insistence, continues to cook the meals. The family eats in the kitchen.



"I don't think, David, that agreeing to disagree is a good foundation for marriage."

II—THE DEFENDANT

Like Willie Gary, Ray Loewen came from a large family. He was born in 1940, the tenth of twelve children of parents of Mennonite background, in the small rural community of Steinbach, in the province of Manitoba, Canada. He, too, eventually became rich. His father ran the town's only funeral parlor and ambulance service. The Loewen family, which occupied a large house adjacent to the funeral parlor, always struggled to make ends meet. From an early age, Ray Loewen assisted his father in the family business. By the time he was thirteen, he was driving the station wagon that served as an ambulance. He and his father covered most of southeast Manitoba, appearing at the scene of all local tragedies—murders, suicides, and car accidents—to recover bodies. In his memory, many of these journeys seemed to occur late on winter nights. He learned from his father to embalm and prepare a corpse for burial, and to lift a casket containing a body and liner box—four hundred or more pounds—into the funeral wagon. Despite this early training, he had little idea what he wanted to do in life. His father, who regarded the funeral business as a ministry of sorts, urged him to enter theological college. Lacking a direction of his own, he did so, but he realized that the "calling," as he put it, "was not very strong." He returned home to help his father, who was by then ailing.

Ray Loewen's particular genius in life, as it emerged, did not lie in funeral-directing, but it found its first expression there, in managing the family business. The funeral home received, in an average year, a hundred and twenty-five "calls" (as they are known in the trade), and took in around twenty-five thousand dollars, about two hundred and forty dollars per funeral. Loewen straightened out the accounts, raised prices to levels comparable with those of funeral homes in Winnipeg, and modernized the equipment and facilities. Within a few years, he managed to put the funeral home on a firm financial footing. Then, in 1967, he bought another funeral home, in Fort Frances, Ontario. Two years later, over breakfast with a group of businessmen at the Rainy River Hotel, in Fort Frances, he heard that the owner of the second-largest funeral home—four hundred calls a year—in New Westminister, near Vancouver, was looking for a buyer. Loewen had enough cash only for a small down payment, but he successfully negotiated a graduated payment plan and acquired the funeral home for four hundred and forty-seven thousand dollars.

Even before making that purchase, Loewen had begun to think about the possibility of building a company comprising many funeral homes. He was an ambitious man and a gifted entrepreneur, but the idea that took shape in his mind, bold as it might have seemed to him back then, did not begin to compare with what the future held for him.

The funeral industry in the United States, as in Canada, was embarking on a period of evolutionary change after nearly a century of stability. Before the Civil War, the care of the dead was the domain of the deceased's family and neighbors. The corpse was customarily laid out on a board that was draped with a sheet and supported by chairs at either end. The body was washed, almost always by a female member of the household, and wrapped in a sheet for burial. A local carpenter or furniture dealer supplied a coffin, a simple wooden box with a lid, and an undertaker—often the same carpenter or furniture dealer, or perhaps the owner of a livery stable—brought the coffin to the house and placed the body inside. With family and friends gathered around, a minister performed the appropriate religious rituals, and then the undertaker conveyed the coffin to the cemetery.

Funerals had been conducted in this manner for centuries. Around the time of the Civil War, however, embalming gained wider use in order to preserve the corpses of dead soldiers whose families wanted them shipped home. Embalming was not then a new or mysterious art—its practice, after all, dated back millennia, to ancient Egypt—but the Puritan ethos of early America regarded it as distasteful and unnatural. This sentiment changed greatly when the effects of embalming were witnessed by the huge audience gathered along the train route of Lincoln's funeral procession, which began in Washington, D.C., and ended in Springfield, Illinois. Lincoln's corpse, of course, had had to be embalmed to make the long, slow journey. And it was not placed in a simple, rough-hewn coffin. His body was displayed in an ornate mahogany casket—the new, more refined term for a coffin—with silver-plated hardware and a silk-draped interior.

By the late nineteenth century, caring for the dead had become a business. Casket-makers such as the Stein Manufacturing Company, of Rochester, New York, offered a variety of styles to an increasingly prosperous middle-class public. Embalming, which was now also extolled as a public-health measure, could not be discreetly performed in the home of the deceased. It required a separate facility, and this, along with the growth of cities, occupational mobility, and a consequent trend toward smaller dwellings, led to the development of the funeral home. Undertakers—who had come to prefer the more dignified term "funeral directors"—banded together in 1882 to create the National Funeral Directors Association. The aim of this brotherhood—virtually all were men—was to elevate their status to that of a profession, by setting educational standards, regulating admission, and controlling prices. On the basis of a perceived similarity between embalming and surgery, they sought favorable comparison both to the medical profession and, given the solemnity of their calling, to the clergy.

Funeral directors never wholly succeeded in their quest for professional status, but they did become, for the most part, respected members of their communities. They tended to be active in civic affairs, a visibility that accrued directly to the benefit of their funeral homes' call rates. Once established in a community, a well-managed funeral home provided a handsome and dependable income, immune to the economic fluctuations and business cycles that afflict most other areas of commerce. Death rates are highly predictable. There is always a steady supply of corpses, and an equally steady demand for their disposal.

For these reasons, sons routinely followed fathers into the family business.

Today, there are about twenty-two thousand funeral homes across the United States; eighty-seven per cent of them are family-owned and have been in the same family for an average of sixty years.

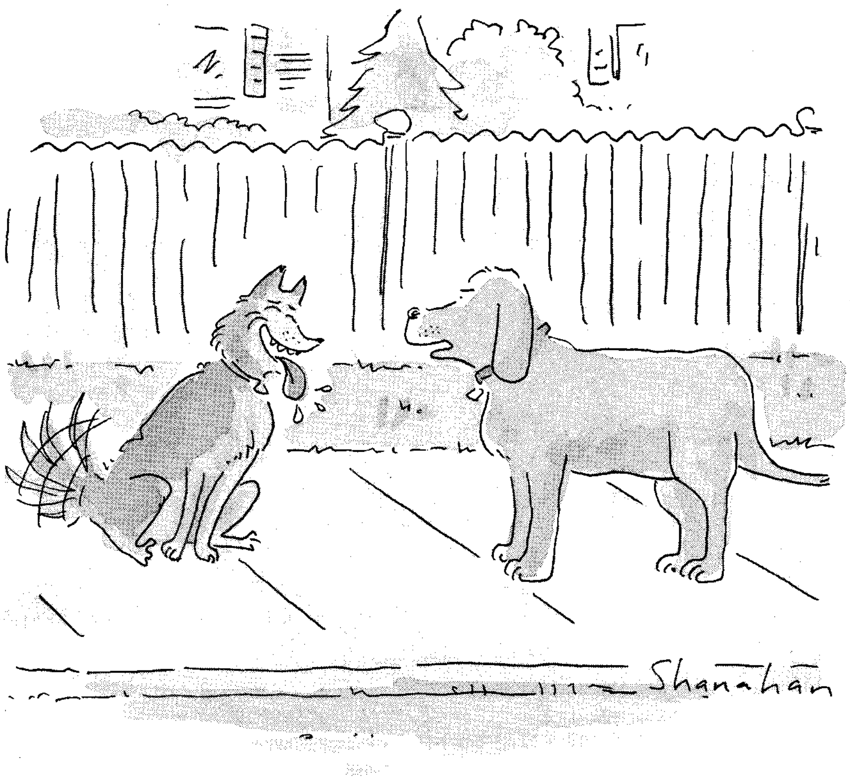
By the late nineteen-sixties, however, Ray Loewen was beginning to notice a subtle shift in the pattern of funeral-home ownership. It seemed to him—and to others in the business, as well—that increasing numbers of funeral homes were coming up for sale, that the offspring of many owners were, for various reasons, electing not to stay in the family business.

Loewen saw opportunity in this trend and began buying funeral homes from owners who had, as he liked to say, "succession needs." By the end of 1984, he owned twenty. The following year, he bought one of the largest and oldest funeral homes in the Canadian Maritimes, J. A. Snow, in Halifax, which had embalmed three hundred bodies from the Titanic disaster.

Loewen and his chief financial officer, Robert Lundgren, pursued one deal after another. Minutes after they heard word of a funeral home on the market, they'd head for the airport. In Manitoba one night, they closed a deal at four in the morning and, hours later, boarded a plane in pursuit of another deal.

By 1987, Loewen owned sixty-eight funeral homes. All of them were in Canada. Although the United States market was immense and had great potential for consolidation, he knew that many Canadian firms had met a dismal fate in the United States. "A lot of them get eaten alive," Lundgren said recently, recalling a discussion that he and Loewen had had on the subject. "It's very competitive, a much different atmosphere than Canada."

Nevertheless, that year Loewen found himself presented with two American opportunities that he could not ig-



"It's me, Lucky—you can drop the best-friend shtick."

nore. The first came from a very large funeral home—twelve hundred calls—in Flint, Michigan. Still wary of the United States, he and Lundgren went to Michigan, where they spent considerable time pondering the deal. Before they had a chance to act on it, Loewen got another inquiry, from Fresno, California, from the owner of eight funeral homes known as the Whitehurst Group. This man, who was in his seventies, was ill, and was being courted by an American funeral-home consolidator called Service Corporation International. On meeting him, Loewen recalls that the man vowed to burn his funeral homes to the ground before selling out to Service Corporation International. It seemed to Loewen that destiny had resolved all his doubts about entering the United States market.

LOEWEN retained the name of every funeral home he acquired and, with it, the base of customers and the good will that its former owner had built up in the community. The Loewen name and corporate logo never appeared above a new acquisition's door or on its stationery. Most citizens remained unaware of any change in ownership. This illusion was further abetted by the fact that Loewen, out of necessity as well as inclination, tried to keep many of his acquisitions' key personnel, including the former owners, who tended to stay on to manage day-to-day affairs. Loewen never regarded this as deception. A successful funeral home's most valuable asset was its reputation in the community, achieved by years of service. And reputation was an asset easily quantified: it was measured by the number of calls that a home performed year after year.

Virtually all of Loewen's new acquisitions had turned a profit before he bought them, and he made them even more profitable. Consolidation resulted in efficiencies of scale that were not available to family-owned businesses. Loewen, for example, needed a large supply of coffins. He could bargain with the biggest casket-maker in North America, the Batesville Casket Company, of Indiana, for a substantial reduction in price based on volume. The same was true of all the other supplies—from embalming fluids to hearses—needed to operate a funeral home. He found further savings by instituting a centralized accounting system, thereby reducing payroll costs in each home.

Loewen did not pass these savings on to the consumer. He needed the increased margin of profit to pay for the capital costs of acquisition. It was his practice to raise prices immediately by as much as fifteen per cent in every newly acquired funeral home. He called these price increases "revenue enhancement." In the funeral business, raising prices traditionally meets with little consumer resistance, at least in the short run. Most people, in their moment of grief over the death of a family member, do not comparison shop for funeral services. And most also dislike scrimping—or, at least, appearing to be scrimping—when it comes to selecting caskets and other burial finery for a loved one.

The Loewen Group, as Loewen now called his company, grew steadily after entering the United States. Loewen acquired thirty or so funeral homes in each of the first three years. Then, in 1990, he doubled the size of his company when, in that single year, he bought a hundred and thirty-seven funeral homes. The following year, he added ninety-seven more.

Loewen, of course, no longer had time to negotiate the fine contractual details of each new acquisition. He often left that task to a growing staff of experts. He would, however, invariably court the owners of potential new acquisitions. He'd invite them up to Vancouver, where he had built a new corporate headquarters. He'd take them out for a cruise up the Canadian coast on his oceangoing yacht, the Alula Spirit. The yacht, of the Queenship class, was a hundred and ten feet long, required a full-time crew, and had room for cocktail parties of sixty or more people. It became a fixture in Loewen's way of doing business.

In almost every aspect of his personality, Loewen seemed perfectly equipped to sell himself and his company to owners of small funeral homes. As the chief executive of a growing company, he was extroverted, unabashedly garrulous, dictatorial, sometimes quick to anger, and capable of a certain charm when the occasion called for it. At certain moments, when he was not engaged in the press of business, he could only marvel at his own good fortune. He had become a very wealthy man, and the future seemed bright beyond all expectation. The Loewen Group predicted a sixty-per-cent increase in death rates in the coming decades, a consequence of the aging of the postwar baby-boom population. And the potential for funeral-home consolidation in the United States appeared virtually unlimited. His forebodings about doing business in America had proved baseless, like a child's fear of the dark. He surveyed an American landscape of thousands of funeral homes, most of them mom-and-pops (as the consolidators called the family-owned homes), many of them with succession problems of one sort or another in their future.

One such funeral home was in the Deep South, in Gulfport, Mississippi. It was owned by a man named Robert Riemann. The Loewen Group had bought the Riemann funeral business—his first acquisition in Mississippi—in January, 1990. Then he acquired Wright & Ferguson, the largest and most esteemed funeral home in Jackson. Looking back on it some years later, Loewen must have felt that he had unwittingly crossed a border and entered a foreign land, with strange and unpredictable customs. With the purchase of Wright & Ferguson, he set in motion a chain of events, foreseeable to none, that would prove nearly fatal to his company.

III—THE CASE

WILLIE GARY'S success has led to extraordinary demands on his time. His secretary receives as many as seventy-five calls a day from people who insist on talking to him. Many of these calls come from colleges, law schools, bar associations, churches, and philanthropic organizations seeking him as a speaker. Some come from lawyers pleading for his assistance in their cases.

On a Wednesday in early May, 1995, two lawyers from Mississippi came to Stuart, expecting an audience with Gary. On arriving, they were informed by Gary's secretary that he was working on a case in North Carolina, but that he would return that evening. The two Mississippi lawyers made themselves at home in Gary's reception room, which was as spacious as a hotel lobby and furnished with comfortable sofas and wing chairs.

One of the lawyers, Halbert Dockins, Jr., had met Gary briefly some years earlier at a convention of the Magnolia Bar Association, a group of black lawyers who practice in Mississippi. Gary had been the featured speaker at the convention, and after his speech Dockins, along with many other lawyers, had approached him. Dockins had managed to shake Gary's hand and tell him that he was a source of inspiration. This was manifestly true. Dockins kept on his desk a photograph of Gary seated in his ornately decorated Stuart office. "When I got depressed," Dockins once recalled, "I'd say to myself, 'This guy came from nothing. If he can do it, I can do it.'"

The lawyer travelling with Dockins was named Michael Cavanaugh. He was white. He and Dockins were not law partners, but they shared a particular client, a Biloxi businessman named Jeremiah O'Keefe. It was on O'Keefe's behalf that they had come to Florida to see Gary.

Dockins and Cavanaugh bided their time in the reception room. Late in the afternoon, Gary's secretary informed them that he would not be returning until Friday. He had asked her to convey his regrets at the delay.

On leaving the reception room, Dockins said to Cavanaugh, "I'm not going back to Mississippi without talking to him." They checked into a hotel in Stuart. Cavanaugh spent the next day sunning himself by the pool. Dockins worked out in the exercise room. They ate dinner together. They discussed their client's case. They refined once again the presentation they hoped to make to Gary.

On Friday, they resumed their vigil. When Gary walked into his office at five o'clock that afternoon, Dockins jumped nervously to his feet. Gary grinned broadly at him and embraced him in a hug of the sort that most men reserve for their oldest and best friends, and then only after an absence of years. "What've you got for me?" Gary asked Dockins. "You got a P.I. case for me?"

"Yeah, it's a personal-injury case," replied Dockins. "Except it's got a little twist to it."

In fact, the case had nothing to do with personal injury. It was at heart a commercial case—a contract dispute—and Dockins knew that Gary did not take commercial cases. He felt he needed time to sell the case to Gary. And, besides, in Dockins's mind the injury suf-

Gahan Wilson

"What are you doing outside of coach?"

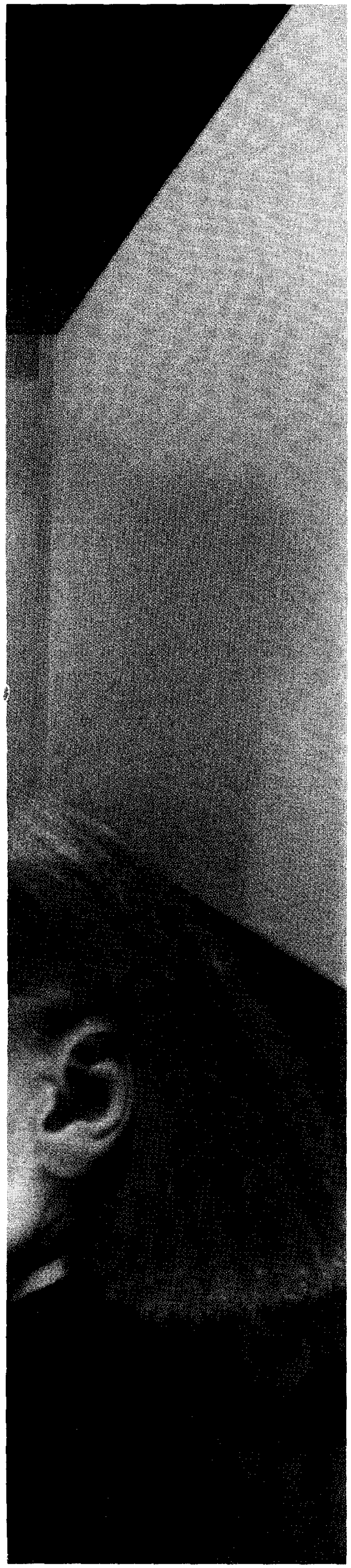
fered by his client Jeremiah O'Keefe was indeed personal.

Dockins and Cavanaugh spent several hours with Gary that evening. They described the case to him in broad outline. Their client was a small businessman, the owner of eight funeral parlors in Mississippi and a funeral-insurance business. As clients went, Jeremiah O'Keefe was of the sort a lawyer might dream about. He and his wife, who were now in their early seventies, had thirteen children, several of whom worked in the family business. He had served in the state legislature and, for eight years, as mayor of Biloxi. Dockins, seeking every advantage in wooing Gary, added that in 1976 Mayor O'Keefe had refused the Ku Klux Klan a permit to parade through Biloxi, and that the Klan had spray-painted the words "nigger lover" on the front door of City Hall.

O'Keefe had built a prosperous business from modest beginnings. The family had been in the funeral trade since the end of the Civil War, when Jeremiah's great-grandfather, the proprietor of a livery service, started hauling coffins. But now, according to Dockins and Cavanaugh, O'Keefe found himself at the mercy of a "ruthless" and "predatory" Canadian corporation. That corporation, the Loewen Group, had acquired hundreds of funeral homes across the United States in the past decade. One of its recent acquisitions was in Jackson, Mississippi. O'Keefe had a business relationship of sixteen years' duration with the Jackson funeral home. By contract, twice renewed and affirmed, O'Keefe possessed the exclusive right to sell burial insurance for the Jackson funeral home. But, according to O'Keefe, Loewen had refused to honor that contract and had begun selling its own insurance. O'Keefe complained, and filed a lawsuit. Sometime later, he got a call from Ray Loewen, who invited him up to Vancouver to settle their differences. O'Keefe accepted the invitation. He even went for a dinner cruise on Loewen's yacht.

But when O'Keefe returned to Mississippi he found that the Loewen Group was still selling insurance. He renewed his complaint, and got a call from one of Loewen's senior executives. In the months that followed, O'Keefe and the senior executive negotiated a settlement agreement. The agreement called for O'Keefe to sell three funeral homes to Loewen, at a price to be agreed upon, and for Loewen to turn over his Mississippi insurance business to O'Keefe. This agreement seemed to serve the interests of both parties. Loewen wanted funeral homes, and O'Keefe wanted insurance assets. His funeral-insurance company had made a bad investment in a savings-and-loan venture. He needed to supplement his company's cash reserves to meet the requirements of the Mississippi insurance regulators.

O'Keefe signed the agreement, and Loewen's board of directors approved it. Then, according to Dockins and Cavanaugh, Loewen refused to execute the agreement's provisions. They told Gary that O'Keefe had made several concessions in an effort to complete the deal in a timely fashion. More months passed, and more meetings occurred. The Mississippi Insurance Department placed O'Keefe's company under "administrative supervision." O'Keefe faced the prospect of losing control of the com-



SHOCK THERAPY

Parents with especially disobedient sprouts might head off years at the child psychologist with a trip to "Shockheaded Peter." It's a musical version of "Struwwelpeter," the collection of ghoulish cautionary tales that the German physician Heinrich Hoffmann wrote in 1845 with his four-year-old son in mind. In a sendup of Victorian family values, the British directors Julian Crouch and Phelim McDermott have set the stories in a large-scale version of a child's toy theatre and animated them with Grand Guignol costumes, penny-dreadful melodrama, and music by the British cult band the Tiger Lilies. The Lilies are led by the accordion player Martyn Jacques (left, with other cast members), who, in snarling falsetto, tells of small children whose horrid behavior—fidgeting, playing with matches—is ultimately rewarded with an even more horrid fate: death, in a word. The show continues through October at the New Victory.

Photograph by Josef Astor

pany that he had worked his whole life to build. To raise cash, he was forced to sell four funeral homes—including the three he'd initially agreed to sell to Loewen—to another consolidator, one of Loewen's competitors.

O'Keefe came to the conclusion that Loewen had never intended to complete the deal. He believed that it had been little more than a ruse. If he were to go bankrupt, Loewen could pick up the pieces of his funeral business for a fraction of their real value. O'Keefe amended his original lawsuit. He added a second breach of contract, alleging that the Loewen Group had acted "fraudulently and maliciously" and had "breached good faith." He also asserted that Loewen engaged in "predatory trade practices" and attempted to create monopolies.

Gary listened patiently throughout this presentation, asking questions now and then. Cavanaugh had the impression that the case did not engage his interest, that he was merely being polite. But Dockins felt encouraged. "He was so gracious, so courteous," Dockins recalled later. That evening, Gary invited Dockins and Cavanaugh over to his home on Sewall's Point, on the Saint Lucie River. He introduced them to his wife and gave them a tour of the Mediterranean-style villa, in which almost every door handle and hinge, even the ones to the laundry room, was plated in 18k. gold. In Gary's vast closet, Dockins fingered silky materials and expressed awe. Gary invited Dockins to try on whatever appealed to him, and Dockins did so with relish. Cavanaugh, himself no stranger to the things that money could buy, was also impressed, not so much by Gary's opulence but by his manner. "He showed us his big house, his automobiles," Cavanaugh recalls, "but not in a braggadocio way. He told us he dropped out of school at age fourteen."

They met again on Saturday morning, in Gary's office. This time, Gary asked one of his partners, Robert Parenti, to sit in on the meeting. He said to Dockins, "O.K., Hal, explain the case to Bob." Dockins began doing so, with Cavanaugh adding details.

Dockins had spent many months working on the case. It was a dense thicket of legal theories—predatory trade practices, monopolies, and the law of contracts—with which he'd had little experience. He would sit at the counsel table during the trial, but the lead lawyer for O'Keefe, the one who would make the opening and closing statements and examine most of the witnesses, was a man named Michael Allred. It was Allred, actually, who had come up with the multiplicity of legal theories that adorned an otherwise straightforward contract case.

WmHamilton

"Now, were those friends of yours Gettys or Gottis?"

At one point, as Dockins labored to explain the complexities of the case, Willie Gary suddenly jumped up, fists clenched like a boxer ready to deliver body blows. "Loewen lied to Jerry O'Keefe!" he shouted. "He flat-out lied to him!" Dockins was startled by the way Gary brushed aside all the arcane theories and reduced the case to its simplest elements. "This case," Gary exclaimed, standing before Dockins and Cavanaugh, his voice raised, "is about lying, cheating, and stealing!"

DOCKINS and Cavanaugh returned to Mississippi fully convinced that they needed Willie Gary to lead their trial team. But Gary had rejected their pleas to sign on with them. He'd told them that he liked the case and he would offer them "pointers" now and then, but that he simply had too much else to do.

When Jeremiah O'Keefe heard Dockins and Cavanaugh's report, he prepared to embark on his own pilgrimage to see Willie Gary. "I'll have to take Allred with me," he told Dockins and Cavanaugh.

"My God," Dockins exclaimed.

"Don't do it!" Cavanaugh warned.

Michael Allred was intelligent and industrious, and he had an intimate knowledge of the factual minutiae in the case, but he also had a temperament that seemed to create offense wherever he went. He was a large man with ginger hair and a ginger beard and a stentorian voice. His grandfather had been a member of the Ku Klux Klan, and Allred had grown up on a farm in the most unregenerate and racist region of Mississippi. He'd even been known to state, in his manner of blunt candor, that he harbored racist attitudes. To many who encountered him Allred always seemed to be lecturing, instructing, and remonstrating, in a tone at once pompous and condescending. These qualities were not necessarily bad ones in a trial lawyer cross-examining a hostile witness, but they tended to cause problems in everyday life. Dockins, for one, could barely tolerate Allred's presence, and Cavanaugh didn't feel much affection for him, either. Even worse, however, was the change that would come over the presiding judge in the case, James E. Graves, Jr., a black man. When Allred stood before the bench to address him in pretrial proceedings, the Judge's brow would knit, his eyes would narrow, and his comments would grow more caustic the longer Allred talked. Allred knew that others reacted to him in a prickly fashion, but he attributed this to the fact that he did not, in his words, "tolerate fools easily." To Allred, the world was populated largely by fools.

Dockins and Cavanaugh, however, were concerned about the fact that the jury pool in Hinds County, which encompassed the city of Jackson, was approximately two-thirds black. A jury of twelve would likely consist of at least six, and perhaps as many as eight or nine, black citizens. To have Allred addressing such a jury, in front of a judge who did not like him, seemed risky indeed.

There were other reasons for concern. A month earlier, the Loewen Group, which already employed a large corporate law firm in Jackson, and another one in Chicago, just to oversee the case, had added two black lawyers to its legal team. One of these lawyers was an elected state senator, the other a state representative and chairman of the black congressional caucus. Both of the lawyers were able, but it was not as if Loewen needed additional able lawyers. "They were already wheeling briefs in on dollies," Dockins recalled. He viewed the arrival of the new lawyers as racial pandering of the most blatant sort. "We've been out-blacked," he told O'Keefe. "Loewen is stacking the deck with black politicians." Dockins had contended that they needed to counter Loewen's moves with a first-class trial lawyer, and he had one in mind—one who, as fortune would have it, happened to be black.

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Mother Nature's
HEALTH FOODS
YES, WE HAVE
*RED WINE!
*CHOCOLATE!
COMING SOON
*TOBACCO!
*COFFEE!

Despite Dockins and Cavanaugh's fears about Allred, O'Keefe brought him to the meeting with Willie Gary, but he took the precaution of preceding Allred by twenty-four hours, so that he could speak to Gary alone.

They met for the first time at the Indian River Plantation, where O'Keefe had booked rooms, a short drive from Gary's office. Over dinner, each man took measure of the other. They were, in every physical aspect, a study in contrasts. O'Keefe had a ruddy complexion, pale-blue eyes, and hair as white as a lawyer's starched shirt. He stood an inch over six feet, but even at the age of seventy-two his erect carriage and robust frame made him appear taller. He possessed the sombre dignity of a funeral director, but his manner was also inflected with humor and warmth. This, at least, was what Willie Gary saw in O'Keefe. "I flat-out liked him," Gary recalled later. "Some clients will tell you what they think you need to hear to take a case. He didn't do that. And my wife fell in love with the guy. She said, 'You've got to help him.' "

The next afternoon, O'Keefe went to pick up Allred at the Palm Beach airport. He lectured him at length on how he should comport himself with Gary, the new lead counsel. Allred appeared to take his change in status in stride. And, indeed, in a meeting that afternoon Allred ceded control of the case to Gary with a measure of grace. They engaged in lively discussion about the details of the case. It wasn't until the next morning, when Allred was clearly feeling relaxed in Gary's company, that he announced, "There's something you should know about me, Willie."

Gary looked up.

"I am prejudiced," Allred said. "But I'm trying to work on it. It's sort of like

"Can anyone remember what our core business is?"

• •

when an alcoholic goes to Alcoholics Anonymous."

Gary's eyes opened fractionally wider. Then he nodded and said, "That's a very good thing to be working on, Mike."

GARY announced his presence to the Loewen Group in June, three months before the start of the trial, by dispatching a settlement demand. Just six months earlier, in January, Cavanaugh and Dockins had tried to settle the case at a meeting in Cincinnati with Loewen executives and lawyers. Cavanaugh had started by asking for six and a half million dollars. He recalls that Loewen's lawyers reacted with incredulity, and then with derision. By the end of the meeting, Cavanaugh remembers, "I did everything but get down on my knees and beg for four million. They said, 'That's outrageous! Our client would fire us if we brought that back to him.' "

Willie Gary now proposed a different amount, a sum he had arrived at with the help of Allred. O'Keefe's actual financial damages, according to Allred, came to about sixteen million dollars. This was a figure that even a dispassionate observer might have regarded as inflated, but Allred also had his eyes on punitive damages, which a jury may award, if it sees fit, to punish especially bad acts. In Gary's view, the cost to Loewen for settling the entire case should be a hundred and twenty-five million, a demand almost twenty times as great as the offer that the Loewen Group had summarily rejected in January.

Loewen and his lawyers ignored the new settlement demand. For O'Keefe, the only indication that Loewen had even received the demand occurred when Loewen hired another lawyer. This lawyer, whose name was Richard Sinkfield, came from Atlanta. He was an experienced trial lawyer. He specialized in antitrust law and complex business litigation. And he was also black.

IV—THE TRIAL

ON the morning of September 12th, when Willie Gary introduced Jeremiah O'Keefe to the pool of prospective jurors in the matter of O'Keefe v. The Loewen Group, Inc., he made it a point to walk over to the counsel table and put his hand on his client's shoulder. Throughout the day of jury selection and the next day, during his opening statement, whenever he mentioned O'Keefe's name he would generally return to the counsel table and put his hand on O'Keefe's shoulder. Often during the next two months, until the day in November when the jury returned its verdict, he continued this ritual. He did not, of course, do it every single time—not in the heat of his cross-examination of Ray Loewen, for example—but he did it so frequently and with such deliberate intent that the jury of twelve citizens (eight of whom were black) could not escape taking note.

At the counsel table, sitting beside O'Keefe throughout the trial, was his wife of fifty years, Annette, who was plump and diminutive. Behind them, occupying the first row of the gallery, were at least six and sometimes as many as ten of their thirteen grown children. This family tableau—the elderly, dignified undertaker and his wife, their good and handsome children—had been assembled and framed by Gary for the edification of the jury. For good measure, he also had on display an actual photograph, greatly enlarged, of the large O'Keefe family.

The purpose of all this was not lost on the lawyers representing Loewen. They could do nothing about the presence of the O'Keefe family in the courtroom, but on the first morning of the trial they did object strenuously to the photograph. The issue in dispute, Richard Sinkfield told the Judge, concerned a contract, not the familial warmth of the O'Keefe family: "The only purpose for which this kind of exhibition is being offered is to try to incur sympathy and favor out of the jury."

Sinkfield was, of course, absolutely right. Gary made it apparent from the outset that he intended to cast the trial as a morality play, a case about "the oldest sin known to anybody, and that's greed." Jeremiah O'Keefe's role in this drama was that of a man of honor and principle, a man of "family values" who "would fight for what's right and what he believes in." Playing opposite O'Keefe, in the role of the villain, was the foreigner from Canada, Ray Loewen, "a man," Gary told the jury, who "wouldn't keep his word, deceived people, and would not deal with honor," a man who sought to "dominate markets, create monopolies, and gouge families that are grieving."

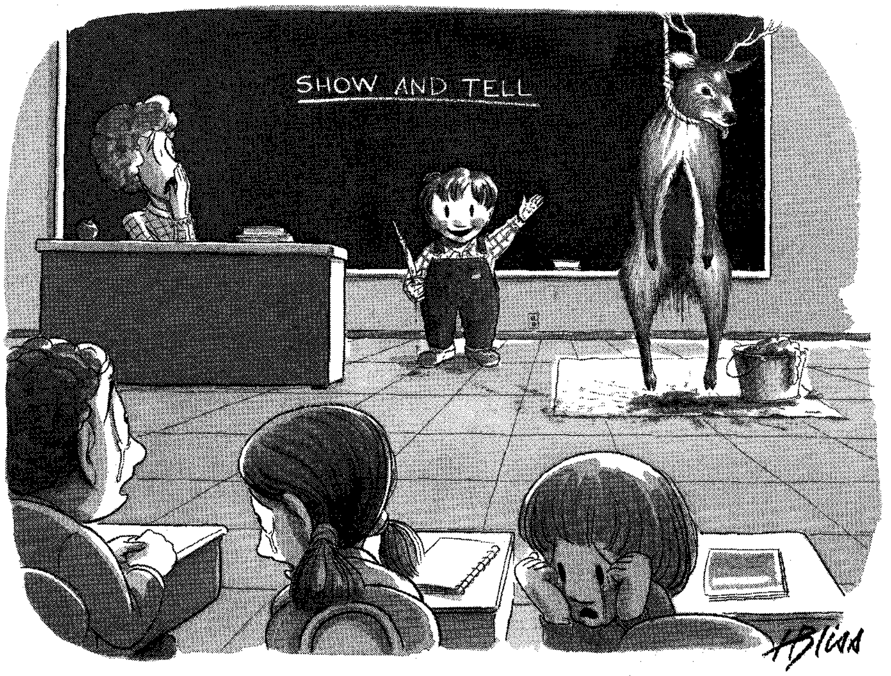
Ray Loewen played the role of villain in absentia, for the most part. He was busy running his company, acquiring more funeral homes, and negotiating with banks for lines of credit to finance those acquisitions. "I didn't think I needed to go to Jackson for the trial," Loewen would say later. "This was completely off the radar screen for me." He knew about Gary's settlement demand of $125 million, but he regarded it as a ridiculous, perhaps desperate, ploy. His legal counsel had assured him that he would win the case. And even if, for some unforeseen reason, he did not win, the maximum probable exposure his company faced, his lawyers told him, would be a loss of between six and twelve million dollars, the approximate amount of O'Keefe's damages.

Five lawyers sat at the Loewen counsel table. More Loewen lawyers watched the proceedings from the gallery. Some of them had never worked together before. More than once, Judge Graves noticed a Loewen lawyer at the counsel table looking with incredulity—"as if to say, 'What the hell is he doing?' "—at another Loewen lawyer examining a witness. "Demeanor is important from the moment you walk into the courtroom," the Judge later remarked. "And the jurors noticed everything." Their feelings about each other aside, Loewen's lawyers remained unshaken in their belief that they would prevail on the merits of the case. They might grudgingly agree that Gary had, from time to time, put on a good show, but in their reports to Loewen they insisted that he had not touched them on the only issue that really mattered—the execution of the contracts. They took delight in Judge Graves's thinly concealed dislike for Allred, certain that the jurors saw it, too. Every argument won at a bench conference, every objection sustained, affirmed their belief that they were destined to win. Arguments lost and objections overruled were usually deemed inconsequential or, at worst, excellent grounds for appeal, in the unlikely event that it should come to that.

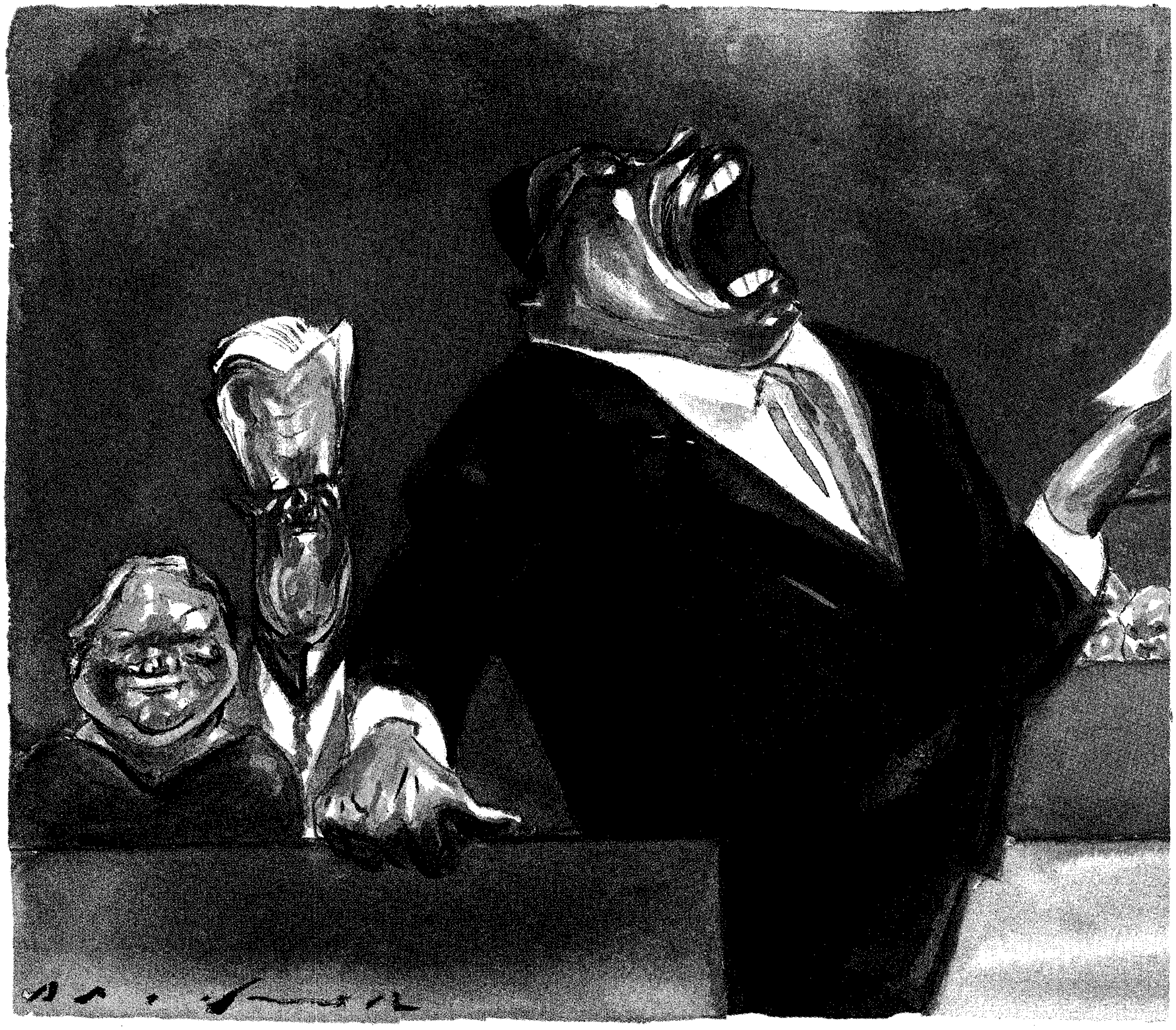
THERE was no dispute about the fact that O'Keefe had a valid contract of sixteen years' duration with the Wright & Ferguson funeral home to sell burial insurance. Nor was there any doubt that O'Keefe and the Loewen Group had negotiated and signed an agreement, which was meant to resolve Loewen's alleged breach of the Wright & Ferguson contract. Loewen's lawyers claimed that he had never breached the contract, but this proved a difficult claim to defend. "Didn't breach the contract?" Gary asked at one point during the trial. "Well, why did you come down here to Mississippi to sign a settlement agreement? You don't go making settlements if you haven't breached a contract."

And then, according to Gary, the signed agreement—itself a contract—was also breached. Loewen's lawyers acknowledged that the provisions of the settlement had never been executed, but they claimed that the document was really more of an "agreement to agree" than a binding contract, and that in the end the parties simply could not come to an agreement. Gary had another explanation for the jury: "They wanted Jerry out of business. They used that settlement agreement to dangle in front of him. They started coming up with all these excuses, one after another, one after another, one after another, and, poor man, he made one concession after another. They beat him down, seventy-two years old, they beat him down, they beat him and they beat him, and it's not right!"

Gary wanted the jury to see a pattern in the fact that Loewen had violated not just one but two contracts, and argued that his method of doing business infected Loewen's entire operation. By way of illustration, Gary's team offered the town of Corinth, Mississippi, where Loewen owned all three funeral homes that catered to the white population. Among the array of coffins and burial wares sold by these funeral homes was an item called the Wilbert Copper Triune Vault, manufactured by the Wilbert Burial Vault Company. The container was a two-ton box with a concrete exterior and a copper lining—a feature that, according to the sales literature, made the vault watertight. These concrete boxes lacked the aesthetic appeal of the caskets they would contain, of the Aurora "Brushed Blue Pietà," for example, or the Batesville "Emerald Mist," but they provided customers with additional "peace of mind" in laying their loved ones to rest. Wilbert sold the Copper Triune to funeral homes for nine hundred and forty dollars, a sum that included the cost of shipping. The funeral homes were free to charge their customers whatever they saw fit, and it was standard practice among most to double the price. But in the town of Corinth, where Loewen had virtually no competition, the price to consumers was twenty-eight hundred and sixty dollars, more than triple the wholesale cost. Two hundred miles away, in Jackson, where Loewen had more competition, his Wright & Ferguson funeral home sold the Copper Triune for nineteen



"And that's how ya clean a deer!"



Loewen, who was absent for much of the trial, was cross-examined at length by Willie Gary. In his closing argument, Ga

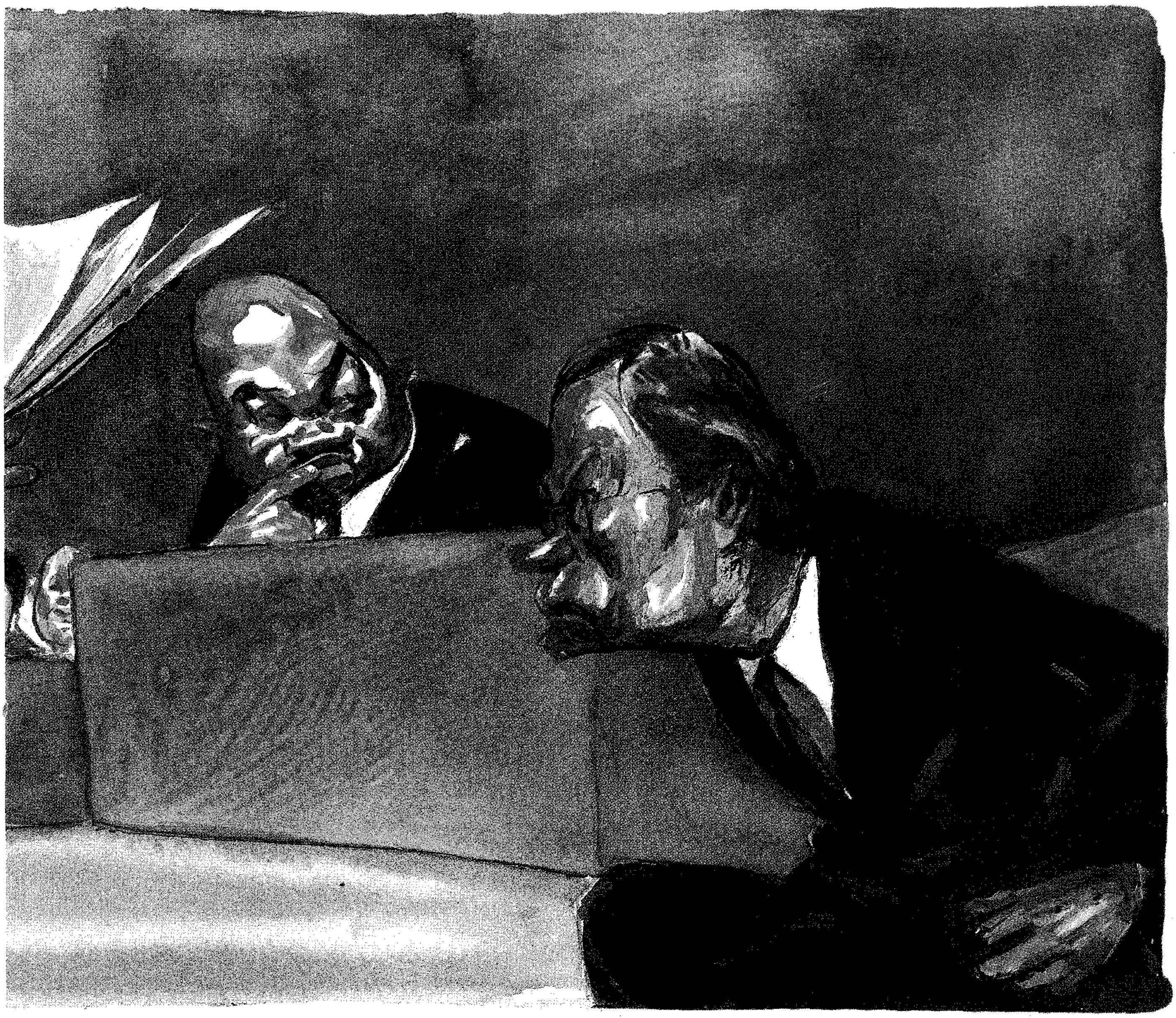
hundred and twenty dollars, about the same price as his competitors. "Some poor fellow has to pay a thousand dollars more for just a box? Just a box!" exclaimed Gary. "They are just shipped out by the people who make them. Funeral home doesn't even have to touch it, doesn't have to put it in the hearse, doesn't have to shovel one bit of dirt. They charge two thousand eight hundred and sixty dollars, that's almost two thousand dollars for making the phone call! That ain't right! Talking about a monopoly, deceptive trade practices!"

As further proof of Loewen's desire to monopolize markets, Gary's team put to repeated use a memo from Loewen's own files, written by a senior executive named Don Holmstrom. "We would be able to beat O'Keefe to that [Jackson] market by at least six months," Holmstrom had written. "In addition, with the strength of the Wright/Ferguson and Baldwin Lee names, I believe we would easily dominate the market."

This is the sort of language that might be found in the files of any company assessing its strength and opportunities in a given market. Indeed, when Holmstrom was confronted on the witness stand with his memo, and with the phrase "dominate the market," he said, "I think that's the goal of every business person."

But the language took on a sinister hue as Gary summoned one witness after another to attest to the Loewen Group's putative greed. There was Lorraine McGrath, a former comptroller for Loewen in the Mississippi region, who had worked on various acquisitions, including the purchase of the Corinth funeral homes. She had quit her job, she testified, in large part because of a crisis of conscience. "The Loewen Group had a consistent policy at that time of raising prices on a fairly regular basis," she stated. "And I was not sure any longer that I agreed with that. It was a personal decision that at some point we should say, 'The price is high enough.' "

John Wright, the former president of Wright & Ferguson and for five years a member of Loewen's board of directors, was called to testify on Loewen's behalf.



ld the jury, "These people just lied, lied, lied, lied. They lied to Jerry and they lied to you. They even lied for no reason."

In this instance, it was Dockins who conducted the cross-examination. He succeeded in turning Wright into a witness against Loewen. "Of the three hundred acquisitions that Loewen has made since you've been on the board," Dockins said to Wright, "have you ever known him not to raise prices once he got those companies?"

"I don't know of a case where he did not raise prices," Wright admitted. "But then I did not have any knowledge of how the businesses were being operated when he took them over."

"Isn't it true," Dockins asked, "that after he acquired Wright & Ferguson Funeral Home, that he raised prices on all of your customers?"

"Yes, prices were raised after we sold."

"Did he consult you about raising prices on your customers all these years before he did it?"

"No," Wright said, "we had no discussion."

Ray Loewen arrived in Jackson in mid-October. He brought his wife, Anne, with him. At the Jackson airport, the Loewen corporate jet was parked right next to Gary's jet. From his plane Loewen read the words "Wings of Justice" emblazoned along the fuselage of Gary's plane.

Loewen smiled cheerfully his first morning in the courtroom and shook hands with everyone in reach. He made it a point to walk over to the O'Keefe family members and deliver a warm greeting to Annette O'Keefe, who looked a little stunned but managed a smile of her own and a civil reply.

He sat at the counsel table with his lawyers and listened to testimony. He had no firsthand experience of the American civil-justice system. In Canada, a case such as this would have been tried in front of a judge, not a jury of laymen who knew nothing about the law of contracts. By the end of the first morning, Loewen's demeanor had undergone a radical change. He had taken the temperature of the courtroom, and he did not like the results. His affable manner turned brusque. At the noon recess, he summoned his lawyers into a conference room across from the courtroom. Members of the O'Keefe family reported hearing an angry voice coming from the conference room. "He was chewing butt," one of the O'Keefe children said.

Some days later, Loewen took the witness stand in his own defense. Guided by Sinkfield, he spoke with pride about his company, the hard work he had invested in it, and the cordial relations he kept with the owners of funeral homes he had acquired. "We're known for our dinner cruises," he told the jury. "We love to entertain funeral directors from across America. They come up in the late afternoon usually, and it's a very pleasant way of establishing relationships, having dinner on our boat."

He recalled few actual details of his dealings with O'Keefe, although he did remember the time O'Keefe and Allred came to Vancouver to discuss the Wright & Ferguson contract. "We had a very pleasant dinner cruise on our boat at that time." He had no recollection of ever saying to O'Keefe that he "didn't object to settling disputes in court." His intentions all along, he insisted, had been honorable. The failure to complete the agreement had resulted from a difference in the valuation of O'Keefe's properties, not from deceit or bad faith.

COPPER BEECH

Why is the earth angry at heaven?
If there's a question, is there an answer?

On Dana Street, a copper beech.
Immense, like the tree of my childhood,
but with a violence I wasn't ready to see then.

I was a child like a pointed finger,
then an explosion of darkness;
my mother could do nothing with me.
Interesting, isn't it,
the language she used.

The copper beech rearing like an animal.

Frustration, rage, the terrible wounded pride
of rebuffed love—I remember

rising from the earth to heaven. I remember
I had two parents,
one harsh, one invisible. Poor
clouded father, who worked
only in gold and silver.

—Louise Glück

The subject of Loewen's boat had come up several times during the trial. Gary had been the first to mention it, six weeks earlier, in his opening statement—"A yacht that the company allows him to spend a million dollars a year just to keep," he'd said—and with that single, offhand remark Loewen's lawyers had felt compelled to defend the boat. They did so at great length. One Loewen executive, under a friendly examination by a Loewen lawyer, testified that the company did not actually own a boat. "From time to time, we rent a boat."

"Who owns the boat that you rent?" the lawyer asked.

"The boat is owned by a private company which, in turn, is owned by Mr. Raymond Loewen. We rent it on a daily basis. To insure that it's available on short notice, we pay what's called a standby fee."

And on it went, with a thorough description of how useful the boat was for doing business, and the manner in which the board of directors set the rental rate. At a bench conference with the lawyers the next morning, Judge Graves warned against any more boat talk. "They spent a whole hour yesterday trying to explain that we don't have a big yacht, but we do," the Judge said. "I'm so sick of hearing about that. I'm the only person in here without a boat, and I've got to hear about these dinner cruises."

But it didn't end there. With Loewen on the witness stand, Sinkfield resumed the subject for reasons no one—not even Loewen, apparently—could fathom. "You mentioned dinner cruises," said Sinkfield. "Is that a boat or is that a yacht?"

"I really don't know the difference," Loewen replied.

"It's a big boat, isn't it?" Sinkfield asked.

"I don't know what's big, but it is one hundred and ten feet long. I'm not sure if that is big."

That was all Gary needed to begin his cross-examination. "Let me ask you this," he said to Loewen. "Does your board of directors know that you don't know the difference between a boat and a yacht?"

"I've had the privilege of entertaining my directors on my boat," Loewen replied.

"Do they know that you don't know the difference between a boat and a yacht?"

"I doubt if they know that," Loewen said.

"Can you land a helicopter on your canoe, boat, or yacht, whichever one?"

"My helicopter pilot can land a helicopter on my boat."

"Oh," Gary said, "you've got your own helicopter and your pilot?"

Three days later, in closing arguments, Gary told the jury, "These people just lied, lied, lied, lied. They lied to Jerry and they lied to you. They even lied for no reason. They lie. What about the boat? Nothing wrong with the man having a yacht, but if you've got a yacht say it!"

He assembled the evidence of the previous two months into a story that appeared nearly seamless in its contours and particulars. It helped that the facts—most of them, anyhow—supported the story. The single weak link—the terms of the contract between O'Keefe and Wright & Ferguson and whether Loewen had actually violated those terms—he brushed effortlessly aside. "You can go with a whole lot of fancy stuff," he said to the jury, "and I told you that I was just a country boy and I said I might not use big fancy words like everybody else. You said you wouldn't hold that against me because I wanted to talk common to you. The bottom line is they broke their word. They broke their word and it was intentional and it was malicious."

And, of course, he told the jury, they also dominated markets, created monopolies, and, worst of all, gouged grieving families. "If you really want to gouge someone, you catch them during that time when they've lost a mother or a father or a child. They are helpless. They are helpless. They are there for the picking. Take them, take them. It's all about dollars with them."

After enumerating these sins, Gary methodically enumerated the sums of money that Loewen should pay to O'Keefe for the damages he had inflicted. There were many categories, all attested to by experts in economics and in the funeral business, and in the end it added up to $105 million. And then, almost as an afterthought, Gary said to the jury, "You may think that is not enough."

It was late Friday afternoon by the time the lawyers had finished their final arguments, so the jury did not begin deliberating until the following Monday morning at eight o'clock. To reach a verdict, only nine of the twelve jurors had to come to an agreement. Given the length of the trial, the complexity of Judge Graves's instructions on the law, and, especially, the nine-page interrogatory that the jurors had to answer in order to return a verdict, everyone presumed the jury would take days to arrive at a decision.

On commencing deliberations, the jurors selected a sixty-three-year-old white man named Glenn Millen as their foreman. He was well educated, an electrical engineer by training, and, although he had lived for the past thirty years in the United States, he was Canadian by birth. He had once served as a juror in a civil case in which the jury had found for the defendant. All in all, he appeared to be the embodiment of the perfect juror for Loewen.

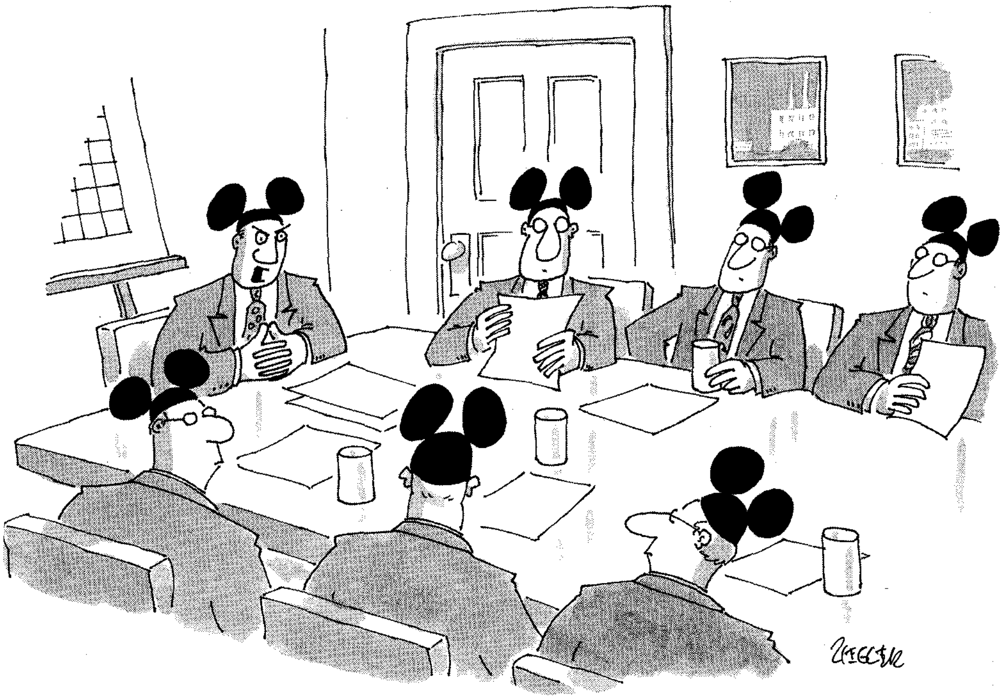
Loewen's lawyers had remained steadfast in the belief that they would prevail on the legal merits of the case, up until the moment on Wednesday afternoon when the bailiff passed the verdict slip to the Judge. Some among them had derided Gary's final argument as "undisciplined and demagogic," a "stream-of-consciousness" rant. The Jackson lawyer who had worked on the case for Loewen since its inception, almost four years earlier, brought his children to the courtroom to witness the announcement of the verdict. Loewen and his wife sat together at the counsel table for the rendering of the verdict. "My senior counsel were telling me that we were ahead on the merits, and I could not believe that we wouldn't win on the merits," Loewen recalled.

"The defense team," Judge Graves remarked later, "never had any idea how out of touch they were with what was going on."

Opposite Loewen, O'Keefe and his wife sat at the plaintiff's counsel table with their lawyers. O'Keefe had instructed his family not to utter a word in the courtroom, whether he won or lost. Cavanaugh had a seat at the end of the counsel table, a vantage point that gave him a direct view of Loewen. In answer to the first question—whether Loewen had breached the Wright & Ferguson contract—Judge Graves read that the jury had said "Yes," and had awarded O'Keefe $31.2 million in compensatory damages. Cavanaugh saw Loewen turn suddenly pale. There were ten questions in all, and each one was answered in the affirmative, followed by a large sum of money. It took the Judge almost ten minutes to read the verdict slip in its entirety. By the end, Cavanaugh saw that Loewen looked stupefied, with the glazed eyes and the pallor of a man in a near-clinical state of shock. The jury had awarded O'Keefe a total of $260 million.

Indeed, Loewen was in shock. "I could not believe what I was hearing," he said of that moment. "I was absolutely stunned. I thought, This can't be happening."

At Sinkfield's request, Judge Graves polled the jurors, and then he explained that they had one more task remaining. The nature of the proceedings required that they return tomorrow morning to consider the issue of puni-



"We do it, Havermeyer, because our corporate parent says we must."

tive damages, and this meant that there would be a presentation of the Loewen Group's net worth. The Judge assured the jurors that the presentation would take only one day.

At the courthouse the next morning, Judge Graves called the lawyers into his chambers and informed them that he had received a note from the jury foreman. The note stated that the jurors had already considered punitive damages in returning their verdict. It had been their intention, wrote the foreman, to award a hundred million dollars in compensatory damages and a hundred and sixty million dollars in punitive damages.

Loewen's lawyers immediately asked for a mistrial, on the ground that the verdict was "contrary to the evidence" and that the foreman's note had made it clear that the jurors had "completely ignored the instructions of the Court."

"That motion is denied," the Judge replied, and he went on to say that he felt inclined to accept the note as clarification of the jury's award and let the verdict stand. The parties, of course, had to agree to this. If they did not, he would have to send the jury back to reconsider the verdict. "This note makes it clear they're going to award a hundred million dollars in compensatory damages," the Judge said. "If I go back in there, I'm also going to allow the plaintiffs to put on their evidence of the defendant's net worth."

Gary consulted briefly with his colleagues. They agreed to accept the verdict as it stood, providing Loewen waived any appeal on the failure to present evidence concerning net worth. But Loewen's lawyers refused to make such a deal.

Judge Graves regarded the Loewen legal team with a look of surprise. "I don't think you want to go back in there," he said to them. "You already know they've given a hundred and sixty million dollars without knowing net worth."

By now, Gary was having second thoughts of his own. He wanted a clean verdict, one that would survive an appeal by Loewen on procedural grounds, and he also rather liked the idea of talking to this jury one more time. "Let's try it!" he exclaimed. "Let's try it!"

When the jurors returned, Gary told them, "You need to have all the cards on the table. And one of the things you didn't have on the table was how much money these people are worth."

He called two economists to the witness stand. Both testified that after an examination of the Loewen Group's annual statements, and forms filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, they had concluded that the company's net worth exceeded three billion dollars.

Sinkfield asserted in his presentation to the jury that the Loewen Group had a net worth of only four hundred and eleven million dollars. But the economist called to testify on Loewen's behalf stated that, in his opinion, the company was worth between six and seven hundred million dollars.

This was, by any measure, an extraordinary and—for Loewen—grievous example of a poorly coördinated presentation by his legal team. But Loewen wasn't there that day to witness it. He had already left town, unable to face the ordeal of sitting once again in the courtroom.

I LOOK REALLY SAD.

Gary, of course, exploited the error without remorse. "Members of the jury, they came in here even up to this morning trying to weasel and slip and slide. The net worth of this company went from four hundred and eleven million to almost seven hundred million dollars in less than thirty minutes. That's what we've been dealing with." He pointed out that Loewen owned nearly eight hundred funeral homes and a hundred and seventy-two cemeteries. "You think," he said, in a voice pitching high with incredulity, "that Ray Loewen would sell all of that business, all of those companies, for four hundred and eleven million dollars?"

And he did not fail to point out Loewen's absence. "He didn't even show up today. That's the ultimate arrogance."

For all of Loewen's sins, Gary asked the jury to award one billion dollars in punitive damages. In his ringing and powerful voice, his pulpit voice, he repeatedly uttered the sum with its plosive consonant: "One billion dollars, one billion dollars, ladies and gentlemen of the jury."

This time, the jurors' deliberation was brief. In less than an hour, they returned a verdict of four hundred million dollars in punitive damages. Along with compensatory damages, the total award came to half a billion dollars. Several of the jurors later revealed that they had been only a single vote short of awarding a billion dollars.

V—THE SETTLEMENT

THE victory party occurred at Mary Mahoney's Old French House Restaurant, in Biloxi, the evening after the jury's final award. A huge throng of revellers gathered for the celebration, which went on for many hours, and was interrupted now and then by calls for quiet and speeches by the lawyers. Willie Gary sang "Stand By Me," and dedicated it to Annette O'Keefe, who had fallen ill with heart palpitations in the waning days of the trial. The bill for the event came to more than eight thousand dollars.

ROAD RAGE HIGHWAY
SAY, PAL- WHAT'S THE BIG HURRY?
MAKE UP YOUR MIND, JACKASS
MOVE IT, GRANDMA

On Monday, November 6th, Judge Graves signed the formal entry of judgment in the amount of five hundred million dollars for the plaintiffs. By then, both parties had begun weighing the consequences of such a staggering verdict. The law of Mississippi required Loewen to post a cash bond of a hundred and twenty-five per cent of the judgment—$625 million—if he chose to appeal the verdict. One intent of the law was to prevent litigants who had lost at trial from dissipating their assets during the pendency of an appeal. But for Loewen—indeed, for any company, even a very large one—to post a cash bond of that size was no easy matter.

O'Keefe had no doubt that Loewen would like to appeal if he was able. Neither O'Keefe nor Gary relished the idea of an appeal, which could take years to grind its way through the judicial system, and could also, of course, end in a reversal. The day after the entry of judgment, O'Keefe asked Gary to contact Loewen's lawyers with the aim of settling the case.

The first meeting took place in New Orleans, in a conference room at the Hotel Intercontinental. Gary later said that it was as if Loewen's lawyers were still "in a coma." They made an offer of less than twenty million dollars. Angry words were exchanged. They raised the offer to twenty-five million. "You act like you just won the case!" Gary exclaimed. "We got a verdict for five hundred million and that's what we want."

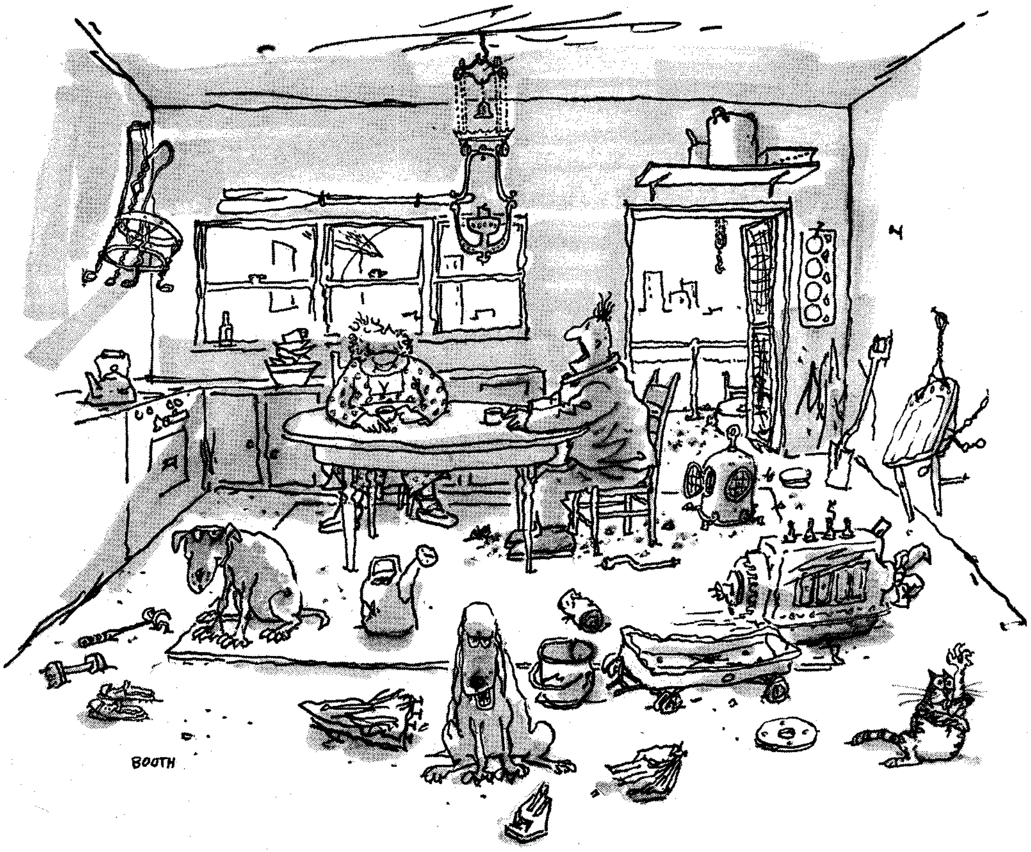
By now, Loewen had begun to suspect that he was the victim of a conspiracy. In time, this suspicion grew to an absolute conviction. He could never adduce the proof to support a conspiracy, yet he saw coincidence and dark synchronicity everywhere. Among other things, he had read a novel by John Grisham called "The Runaway Jury," about a fictional lawsuit tried in Biloxi, of all places, in which a juror conspires to deliver a huge verdict. The truth about his own case, he came to believe, was a conspiracy broader and more twisted than even this fiction. He could not conceive that his circumstances might be the product of his own making, or even just a matter of bad luck.

His circumstances were desperate. Even if, by some miracle, he did manage to post the $625 million bond, and avoid immediate bankruptcy, that in itself would have serious repercussions for the company. The premium payments and interest would amount to tens of millions of dollars, and it would affect the warranties and covenants made to banks that had financed the acquisition of several hundred funeral homes. The lines of credit he had established to fuel the growth of his company would dry up.

In public, Loewen kept his usual optimistic demeanor. "We were all operating in the belief that the courts couldn't allow anything of that magnitude, that justice would prevail," one senior executive recalls. "It was just so grossly absurd. We'd thought we'd get through it—that it was just one of those crazy things."

Loewen's lawyers, meanwhile, were working feverishly. They filed motions for a new trial, for a reversal of the verdict and entry of judgment in Loewen's behalf, and, of course, for a reduction in the amount of the award. Judge Graves heard oral argument on these motions on November 20th. He later remarked that he believed the verdict for O'Keefe had been a proper one, although he intimated that he would have awarded a much lesser sum if the case had been tried to the bench. He declined nonetheless to reduce it. That, he believed, was the province of the Mississippi Supreme Court.

After the hearing, Gary said, "They



"Have you ever seen a dream walking? Well, I have."

have ten days to post the cash bond. If they don't, my client will proceed to take over their assets. That's every funeral home they own, every insurance company, every cemetery, their corporate jet, and their yacht." He had Dockins and Allred preparing lists of Loewen's property and drafting notices of seizure.

Loewen's lawyers issued an immediate appeal to the Supreme Court for relief in the amount of the bond, suggesting instead a bond of $125 million, but on January 24th the Mississippi Supreme Court ruled that Loewen would have to post the entire $625 million by noon on January 31st. Shares of Loewen stock plummeted.

The day after the Supreme Court's ruling, Gary wrote a letter to Loewen's lawyers. "Please be advised," it stated, "that as of 12:00 noon, Wednesday, January 31, 1996, we shall start execution on all property, real and personal, that you have in the state of Mississippi and in other states as well." He offered them a last chance "to resolve this case and avoid bankruptcy" by means of settlement. He renewed an earlier offer to settle for $475 million.

That same morning, the phones began ringing in Jeremiah O'Keefe's office. Most of the calls came from New York, from brokers and investment houses that had positions in Loewen stock. O'Keefe finally talked to one of the most persistent callers, an industry analyst from Goldman, Sachs.

"You won't settle," the analyst said angrily, "and that's unreasonable."

"That's a lie," O'Keefe said, and went on to say that Loewen apparently did not want to settle. He had not attended any settlement discussions, nor had he sent anyone with authority to settle.

"How much money do you want?" the analyst asked.

"I'm not saying how much. There's no offer on the table."

"I'm calling Loewen right now," the analyst said.

Later that day, a Loewen vice-president named Larry Miller called and told O'Keefe that the Loewen Group had authorized him to negotiate a settlement. "I'm willing to sit down if you are," Miller said. They agreed to meet at the Ritz-Carlton in Atlanta the next morning at eleven o'clock.

O'Keefe brought Allred with him to Atlanta, where he met Gary, his partner Lorenzo Williams, and Parenti. Miller awaited them in a conference room upstairs with yet another Loewen lawyer, this one from San Francisco.

In response to Gary's demand for four hundred and seventy-five million dollars, Miller offered fifty million.

Gary said, "I'm going to hire an undertaker and an embalmer and bury y'all."

Thus began what Miller later called "a very painful, very long, all-night process," punctuated by frequent tirades and one party or another going off to caucus and regain its composure.

By evening, they had made little progress. The meeting broke up, and each party went out to dinner. Gary asked O'Keefe, "What would you settle for, Jerry?"

Without so much as a pause, O'Keefe said, "Fifty million, what they've already offered. I'm not leaving here without an agreement."

Gary shook his head sadly, and O'Keefe could tell that he had disappointed him.

Throughout the day, Gary and Allred had done most of the talking. O'Keefe had remained largely silent. At around eleven o'clock that evening, as Miller recalls it, he turned to O'Keefe and addressed him directly. He said, "Mr. O'Keefe, you have to listen to me and keep your advisers quiet for a minute. You have to decide how much money is enough, how much you really need."

Miller left unsaid the fact that O'Keefe, at seventy-two, would not have many years left to enjoy the fruits of his victory, and he certainly would not choose to spend those years in litigation, or squabbling with other creditors over the bankrupt remains of Loewen.

Miller did not say these things, but everyone in the room understood them.

O'Keefe began to speak, and neither Gary nor Allred interrupted him. O'Keefe told Miller he would accept fifty million dollars in cash, a million shares of Loewen stock at a guaranteed price of thirty dollars a share, and a note, payable over twenty years, in the amount of two hundred million dollars.

And from this began the final negotiation that would, after more hours of wrangling over structure, guarantees, and sums, finally result in a settlement. By four o'clock in the morning, they had a contract to fax to Loewen for his signature. There remained, however, one small item to agree upon. Loewen would not sign the contract unless he got assurance from Gary that he would not represent a litigant in a case against him for the following three years. Loewen offered to pay a retainer of twenty thousand dollars per year for this assurance, and Gary agreed.

VI—THE FEE

All lawsuits are unique. Most are unique in ways that concern no one but the litigants. They set no new precedents and pose no special legal or intellectual challenges. They occur beneath the threshold of general recognition. In the case of O'Keefe v. Loewen, however, the sheer size of the verdict and the ensuing settlement made news around the country, in the *Times* and, predictably, on the op-ed page of the *Wall Street Journal*, under the headline "A SMALL CANADIAN FIRM MEETS THE AMERICAN TORT MONSTER."

The award was, of course, outlandish and utterly out of proportion both to the damages and to Jeremiah O'Keefe's expectations. But it was also a rare event, notwithstanding the cries of warning from the *Wall Street Journal*. Until Gary arrived in Mississippi, the largest previous verdict in that state was $18 million.

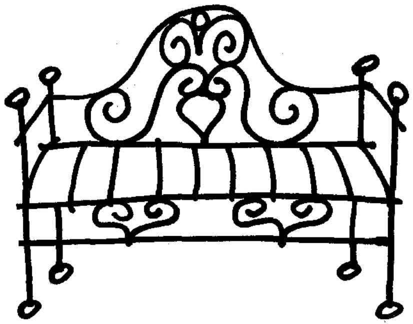
Ray Loewen and his company survived the ordeal. Indeed, it appeared for a while that he was prospering. His stock recovered from a post-verdict plunge to the teens and reached a high of forty-two dollars per share. In two equity offerings the year after the verdict, he raised $382 million and acquired over half a billion dollars' worth of funeral homes and cemeteries. He fought off a hostile takeover attempt by his larger and more powerful rival, Service Corporation International. After his near-death experience in Mississippi, he seemed jubilant about the future.

Mississippi, it turned out, was not just a bad memory but a harbinger. In Loewen's zeal for growth—a zeal that some said was fuelled by delusions of wealth, grandeur, and power—he grew too fast. He burdened his company with a crushing debt. Two years after the verdict, he reported a loss of nearly six hundred million dollars. In October, 1998, Loewen was forced to resign as president and C.E.O. of his own company. Less than a year later, in June of 1999, the Loewen Group, with its shares trading for fifty-three cents on the New York Stock Exchange, went bankrupt.

Loewen reportedly now lives in a condominium in Hawaii. He is a pariah in the funeral industry; thousands of former funeral-home owners whose property he bought are left with virtually worthless promissory notes and stock. Lawsuits against him and his company have proliferated like mushrooms in a forest.

In legal papers filed during bankruptcy, Loewen executives claim that the O'Keefe litigation has had "a lasting, damaging effect on . . . their overall financial health." That claim seems extravagant, given the $3.2 billion of debt that the company had amassed. But if Mississippi was not the direct cause of Loewen's woe it also cannot be dismissed altogether. "Sort of like the Titanic popping a rivet," one of O'Keefe's sons said.

This September, O'Keefe and a group of investors submitted a proposal to the Loewen Group bankruptcy authorities. He offered to buy, at a price of $98 million, all seventy-five funeral homes and thirty-four cemeteries (and a single insurance company) that Loewen owned in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana. He is not unaware of the irony in offering to buy Loewen's property with what was Loewen's money, but he is, above all else, a shrewd businessman who does not like to let a good opportunity slip by.

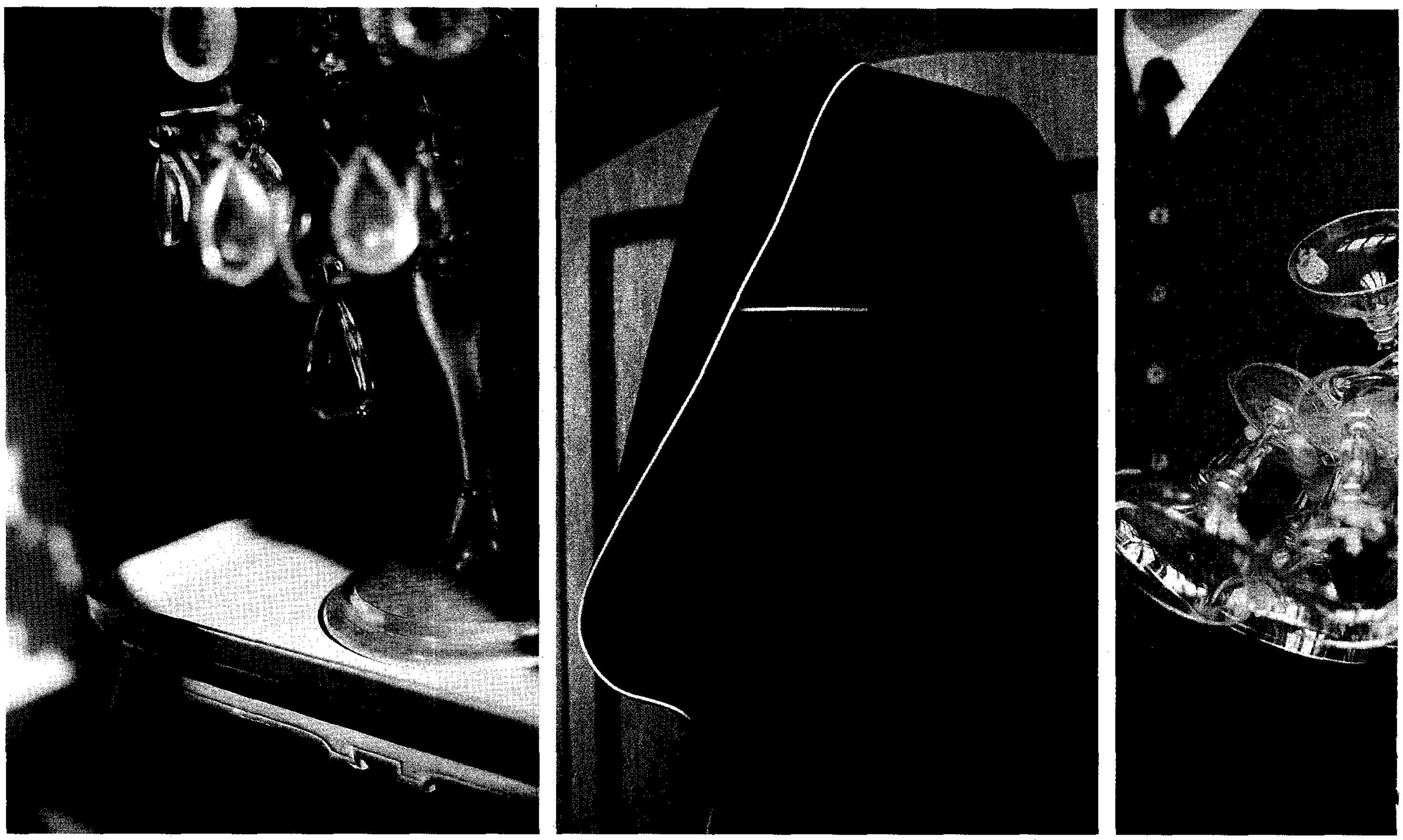


In the category of ironic outcomes, the matter of Willie Gary's fee in the Mississippi case is worth noting. The settlement negotiated by O'Keefe and Larry Miller came to $129 million. Gary was entitled to twenty-five per cent of that sum. He received twelve and a half million dollars of the cash portion of the settlement, and three hundred and seventy-five thousand shares of stock, as well as his percentage of an eighty-million-dollar non-interest-bearing note. For his part, O'Keefe sold his share of Loewen's stock when the price reached $38.70. He called Gary and urged him to do the same, but Gary never did. That stock, of course, is now worth practically nothing, and so is the note. O'Keefe believes that Gary was just too busy trying cases to care much about the stock.

O'Keefe feels great affection for Willie Gary. After the trial, they saw each other often, on occasions both formal and informal. When Annette O'Keefe died, in 1998, at seventy-four, of heart failure, Gary attended her funeral. It was held, of course, in Biloxi, at the flagship funeral home of the O'Keefe family, and it resembled the sort of funeral that a head of state might receive, attended by a thousand people.

In speeches at churches, colleges, and law associations, Gary has often remarked on the fact that he—the great-great-grandson of slaves—represented a man who was the great-grandson of slaveowners. This observation could serve many possible ends, social and political, but Willie Gary seems to intend it only as an illustration of individual initiative, of how the work ethic and the will to succeed can triumph over great adversity.

The reference to slaveholding forebears is the sole thing that Gary has ever said to irk O'Keefe. "I've told him my family never owned slaves," O'Keefe says. "My great-grandfather was a dirt-poor farmer. Willie, he gets kind of carried away sometimes." ♦



FICTION

RAVELSTEIN

Glutton for pleasure, intellectual mentor, and capitalist genius.

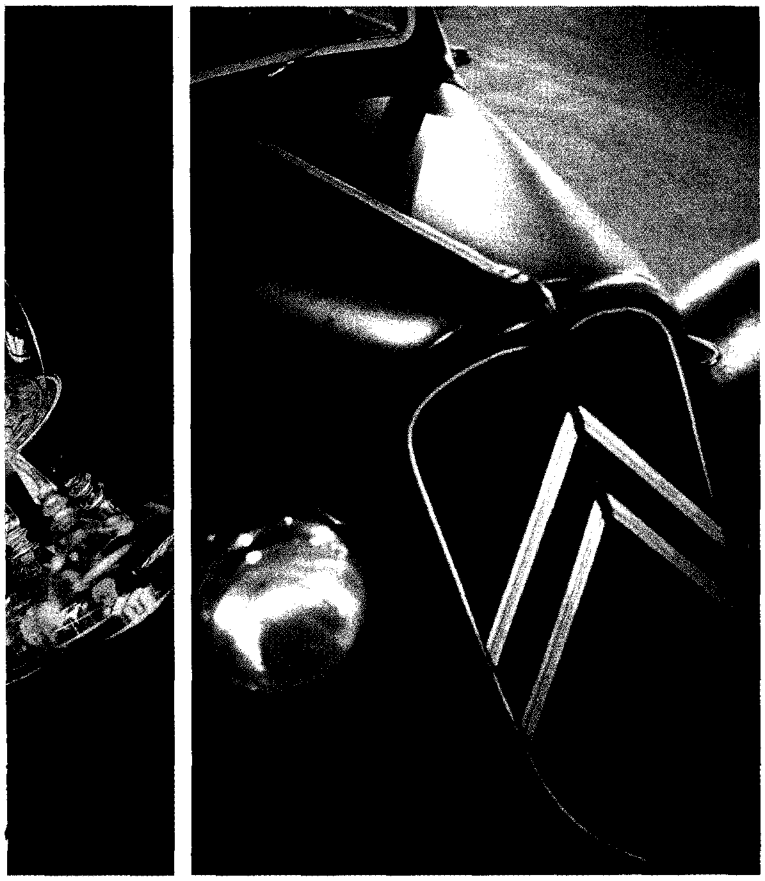
BY SAUL BELLOW

ODD that mankind's benefactors should be amusing people. In America, at least, this is often the case. Anyone who wants to govern the country has to entertain it. During the Civil War, people complained about Lincoln's funny stories. Perhaps he sensed that strict seriousness was far more dangerous than any joke. But people said that he was frivolous, and his own Secretary of War referred to him as a baboon.

Among the debunkers and spoofers who formed the tastes and minds of my generation, H. L. Mencken was the most prominent. My high-school friends, readers of the *American Mercury*, were up on the Scopes trial as Mencken reported it. Mencken was very hard on William Jennings Bryan and the Bible Belt and Boobus Americanus. To Clarence Darrow and Mencken, Bryan the Special Creationist was a doomed Farm Belt absurdity. In the language of evolutionary theory, Bryan was a dead branch of the life tree. His views were subjected to extreme ridicule at the trial, and Bryan went the way of the pterodactyl—the clumsy version of an idea that later succeeded, the gliding reptiles becoming warm-blooded birds that flew and sang.

I filled up a scribbler with quotes from Mencken and added later notes from spoofers or self-spoofers like W. C. Fields and Charlie Chaplin, Mae West, Huey Long, and Senator Dirksen. There was even a page on Machiavelli's sense of humor. But I don't intend to involve you in my speculations on wit and self-irony in democratic societies. Not to worry. I'm glad my old scribbler has disappeared. I have no wish to see it again. It has surfaced here briefly as a sort of extended footnote.

I have always had a weakness for footnotes. For me, a clever or a wicked footnote has redeemed many a text. And I see that I am now using a long footnote to open a serious subject, shifting in a quick move to Paris, to a penthouse in the Hôtel de Crillon. Early June. Breakfast time. The host is my good friend Professor Ravelstein, Abe Ravelstein. My wife, Rosamund, and I, also staying at the Crillon, have a room below, on the sixth floor. She is still asleep. The entire fifth floor (this is not absolutely



RALPH GIBSON, "L'HISTOIRE DE FRANCE"/HOWARD GREENBERG GALLERY

relevant, but somehow I can't avoid mentioning it) is occupied just now by Michael Jackson and his entourage. He performs nightly in some vast Parisian auditorium. Very soon his French groupies will arrive outside and a crowd of faces will be turned upward, shouting in unison, "*Mie-kell Jack-sown.*" A police barrier holds the fans back. Inside, when you look down the marble stairwell from the sixth floor, you see Michael's bodyguards. One of them is doing the crossword puzzle in the *Herald Tribune.*

"Terrific, isn't it, having this pop circus?" said Ravelstein.

The Professor was very happy this morning. He had leaned on the management to put him into this coveted suite. To be in Paris—at the Crillon. To be here, for once, with plenty of money. No more of the funky rooms at the Dragon Volant, or whatever they called it, on the Rue du Dragon; or in the Hôtel de l'Académie, on the Rue des Saints-Pères, facing the medical college. Hotels don't come any grander or more luxurious than the Crillon, where the top American brass were quartered during the First World War.

"Great, isn't it?" said Ravelstein, with one of his rapid gestures.

I confirmed that it was. We had the center of Paris right below us—the Place de la Concorde with the obelisk, the Orangerie, the Chambre des Députés, the Seine with its pompous bridges, palaces, gardens. Of course these were great things to see, but they were greater today for being shown by Ravelstein, who only last year had been a hundred thousand dollars in debt. Maybe more. He used to joke with me about his "sinking fund."

He would say, "I'm sinking with it—do you know what the term means in financial circles, Chick?"

Ravelstein was one of those large men—large, not stout—whose hands shake when there are small chores to perform, not from weakness but from a tremendous eager energy that shakes them as it is discharged. Nobody in the days before he struck it rich had ever questioned his need for Armani suits or Vuitton luggage, for Cuban cigars, unobtainable in the U.S.A., for Dunhill accessories, for solid-gold Mont Blanc pens or Baccarat or Cristal Lalique to serve wine—or to have it served—in.

Well, his friends, pupils, and admirers no longer had to ante up in support of his luxurious habits. He was now very rich. He had gone public with his ideas. He had written a book—difficult but popular—a spirited, intelligent, warlike book, and it had sold and was still selling in both hemispheres and on both sides of the equator. The thing had been done quickly but in real earnest: no cheap concessions, no popularizing, no mental monkey business, no apologetics, no patrician airs. He had every right to look as he looked now, while the waiter set up our breakfast. His intellect had made a millionaire of him.

It's no small matter to become rich and famous by saying exactly what you think—saying it in your own words, without compromise.

This morning, Ravelstein was wearing a blue-and-white kimono. It had been presented to him in Japan when he lectured there last year. He had been asked what would particularly please him, and he said that he would like a kimono. This one, fit for a shogun, must have been a special order. He was very tall. He was not particularly graceful. The great garment was loosely belted and more than half open. His legs were unusually long, not shapely. His underpants were not securely pulled up.

"The waiter tells me that Michael Jackson won't eat the Crillon's food," he said. "His cook flies everywhere with him in the private jet. Anyhow, the Crillon chef's nose is out of joint. His cookery was good enough for Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, he says, and also a whole slew of shahs, kings, generals, and prime ministers. But this little glamour monkey refuses it. Isn't there something in the Bible about crippled kings living under the tables of their conquerors—feeding on what falls to the floor?"

"I think there is. I recall that their thumbs had been cut off. But what's that got to do with the Crillon or Michael Jackson?"

Abe laughed and said he wasn't sure. It was only something that went through his head. Up here, the treble voices of the fans, Parisian adolescents—boys and girls shouting in unison—were added to the noises of buses, trucks, and taxis.

This show was our background. We

were having a good time over our coffee. Ravelstein was in high spirits. Nevertheless, we kept our voices low, because Nikki, Abe's companion, was still sleeping. It was Nikki's habit, back in the U.S., to watch kung-fu films from his native Singapore until four o'clock in the morning. Here, too, he was up most of the night. The waiter had rolled the sliding doors shut so that Nikki's silken sleep should not be disturbed. I glanced through the window from time to time at his round arms and the long shifting layers of black hair reaching his glossy shoulders. In his early thirties, handsome Nikki was boyish still.

The waiter had entered with wild strawberries, brioches, jam jars, and small pots of what I had been brought up to call hotel silver. Ravelstein scribbled his name wildly on the check while bringing a bun to his mouth. When he was feeding and speaking he made you feel that something biological was going on, that he was stoking his system and nourishing his ideas.

THIS morning he was once again urging me to take an interest "in public life, in politics." He had wanted me to try my hand at biography, and I had agreed to do it. At his request, I had written a short account of J. M. Keynes. Keynes, the powerful economist-statesman whom everybody knows for his 1919 "Economic Consequences of the Peace," sent letters and memorandums to his Bloomsbury friends reporting on his postwar experiences, in particular the reparations debates between the defeated Germans and the Allied leaders—Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and the Americans. For reasons of his own, Ravelstein best remembered the passages describing the German bankers' inability to meet the demands of France and England. The French were after the Kaiser's gold reserves. The English said they would settle for hard currency. One of the French negotiators was a Jew. Lloyd George, losing his temper, turned on this man: he did an astonishing kike number on him, crouching, hunching, limping, spitting, zizzing his esses, sticking out his backside, doing a splayfoot parody of a Jew-walk. All this was described by Keynes to his Bloomsbury friends. Ravelstein didn't think well of the Bloomsbury intellectuals. He disliked their high camp; he disapproved of queer antics and of what he called "faggot behavior." He couldn't and didn't fault them for gossiping. He himself loved gossip too well to do that. But he said that they were snobs, not thinkers, and that their influence was pernicious. The spies later recruited by the G.P.U. or the N.K.V.D. in England in the thirties were nurtured by Bloomsbury.

Ravelstein thought I had a rhetorical problem. I said that too much emphasis on the literal facts narrowed the wider interest of the enterprise.

"I wouldn't dream of meddling," he said. "But I think you'd agree that I'm trying to do you some good."

Of course I understood his motive. He thought I was stuck in privacy and should be restored to community. "Too many years of inwardness!" he used to say. I badly needed to be in touch with politics—not local or machine politics, or even national politics, but politics as Aristotle or Plato understood the term, rooted in our nature. You can't turn your back on your nature. I admitted to Ravelstein that reading those Keynes documents and writing the piece had been something like a holiday. Rejoining humankind, taking a humanity bath. There are times when I need to ride in the subway at rush hour or sit in a crowded movie house—that's what I mean by a humanity bath. As cattle must have salt to lick I sometimes crave physical contact.

"And what about the Jewish side of the thing?" Ravelstein asked.

"Keynes didn't like it much. You may remember that the only friendship he made at the peace conference was with the Jewish member of the French delegation."

"No, they wouldn't really have cared for a man as common as Lloyd George, those Bloomsburies."

But Ravelstein knew the value of a set. He had a set of his own. Its members were students he had trained in political philosophy and longtime friends. It was very pleasant to win Ravelstein's approval and his old students kept coming back to him. Some of them now held positions of importance on national newspapers. Quite a number served in the State Department. Some lectured in the War College or worked on the staff of the national-security adviser. One was a protégé of Paul Nitze. Another, a maverick, published a column in the Washington *Times*. Some were influential, all were well informed; they were a close group, a community. From his disciples Ravelstein had frequent reports, and when he was at home he spent hours on the phone with them. He kept their secrets, more or less. At least he didn't quote them by name.

Even in the Crillon penthouse today the mobile telephone was held between his bare knees. The Japanese kimono fell away from legs paler than milk. He had the calves of a sedentary man—the shinbone long and the calf muscle abrupt, without roundness. Some years back, after his heart attack, the doctors told him that he had to exercise, so he bought an expensive sweatsuit and elegant gym shoes. He shuffled around the track for several days and then gave it up. Fitness was not his cup of tea. He treated his body like a vehicle—a motorbike that he ran at top speed along the rim of the Grand Canyon.

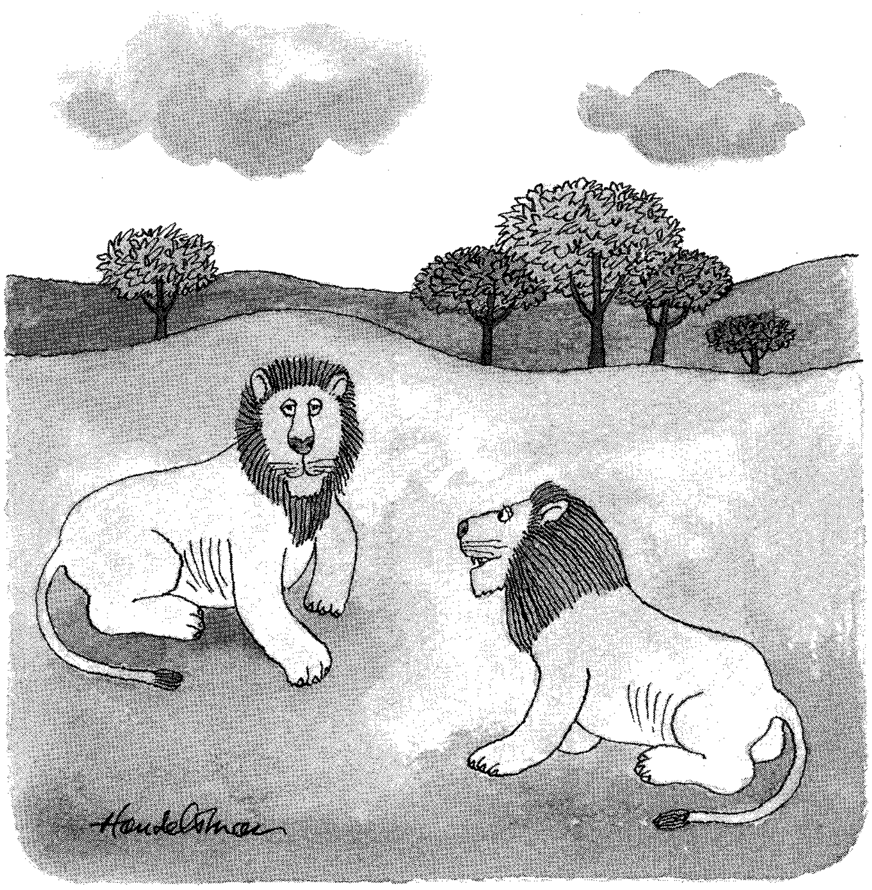
"I'm not too surprised at Lloyd George," Ravelstein said. "He was a contentious little fucker. He visited Hitler in the thirties and came away with a high opinion of him. Hitler was a dream to political leaders. Whatever he wanted done was done, and quickly. No muss, no fuss. Very different from parliamentary government." It was enjoyable to hear Ravelstein on what he called "Great Politics." He speculated often on Roosevelt and Churchill. He had a great respect for de Gaulle. From time to time he got carried away. Today, for instance, he spoke of Lloyd George's "pungency."

"Pungency is good," I said.

"In the matter of language the Brits had it all over us. Especially when their strength began to bleed away and language became one of their important resources."

"Like Hamlet's whore who must unpack her heart with words."

Ravelstein with his bald powerful head was at ease with large statements and big issues, with decades, eras, centuries. He was very pleased with my Keynes sketch.



“I like that—‘compassionate predators.’ ”

“THERE’S something in the way you tell a story that gets to me, Chick,” Ravelstein would say. “I’d like you to write me up, after I’m gone. You could do a really fine memoir. It’s not just a request,” he added. “I’m laying this on you as an obligation. Do it in your after-supper-reminiscence manner, when you’ve had a few glasses of wine and you’re laid back and making remarks. . . . I want you to do me as you did Keynes, but on a bigger scale. And also you were *too* kind to him. I don’t want that. Be as tough as you like. You aren’t the darling doll you seem to be, and by describing me maybe you’ll emancipate yourself.”

“From what, exactly?”

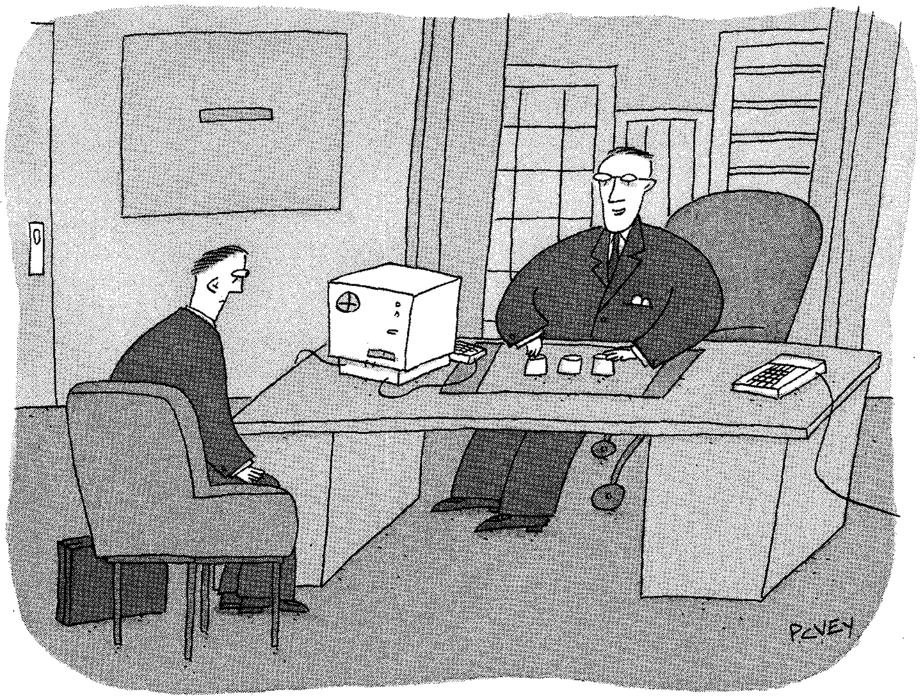
“Whatever it is that controls you—some sword of Damocles hanging over you.”

“No,” I said. “It’s the sword of Dimwitocles.”

“Dimwitocles” was Ravelstein’s kind of gag, and he laughed like Picasso’s wounded horse in “Guernica,” rearing back.

Ravelstein’s legacy to me was a subject—perhaps the best one I had ever had, perhaps the only really important one. But such a legacy signified that he would die before me. If I were to predecease him he would certainly not write a memoir of me. Anything beyond a single page to be read at a memorial service would have been unthinkable. Although I was twenty years his senior, we were close friends, none closer. There were sophomoric elements in my character as there were in his, and these levelled the ground and evened things up. What we were laughing about was death, and, of course, death does sharpen the comic sense. But the fact that we laughed together didn’t mean that we were laughing for the same reasons. That Ravelstein’s most serious ideas, put into his book, had made him a millionaire certainly was funny. It took the genius of capitalism to make a valuable commodity out of thoughts, opinions, *teachings*. Bear in mind that Ravelstein was a teacher. He was not one of those conservatives who idolize the free market. He had views of his own on political and moral matters. Put together in a book his ideas made him absurdly rich. He was spending the dollars almost as fast as they came in. Just now he was considering a new, five-million-dollar book contract. He could command big fees on the lecture circuit. And he was a learned man, after all. Nobody disputed that. You have to be learned to capture modernity in its full complexity and to assess its human cost. On social occasions he might be freaky but on the platform you could see how well grounded his arguments were. It became only too clear what he was talking about. The public saw higher education as a right. The White House affirmed it. Students were like “the mackerel-crowded seas.” Thirty thousand dollars was the average annual college tuition. But what were students learning? The universities were permissive, lax. The discipline of an earlier time was gone. Relativism held that what was right in Santo Domingo was wrong in Pago Pago and that moral standards were therefore anything but absolute.

Now, Ravelstein was no enemy of pleasure or of love. On the contrary he saw love as possibly the highest blessing of mankind. I don’t intend to explain here the erotic teachings of Aristophanes and Socrates or of the Bible. For that, you must go to Ravelstein himself. For him, Jerusalem and Athens were the twin sources of civilization. Jerusalem and Athens are not my dish. I was too old to become Ravelstein’s disciple. All I need to say now is that he was taken very seriously even in the White House and on Downing Street. He was Mrs. Thatcher’s guest at Chequers. Reagan invited him to dinner, and Ravelstein spent a fortune on formal attire, cummerbund, diamond studs, patent-leather shoes. A columnist at the *News* said that to Ravelstein money was something you threw from the rear platform of a speeding train. Ravelstein showed me the clipping with shouts of laughter. Through it all he was deeply amused. And, of course, I didn’t have the same reasons for amusement. The



"O.K., which cup is your job under now?"

• •

vast hydraulic forces of the country had not picked me up, as they had him.

IN approaching a man like Ravelstein, a piecemeal method is perhaps best. I had come up to his penthouse luxury suite on this June morning in Paris not so much to discuss the biographical essay I was going to write as to collect some facts about his parents and his early life. I didn't want more detail than I could use and I was by now familiar with the large outlines of his life story. The Ravelsteins were a Dayton, Ohio, family. His mother, a powerhouse, had put herself through Johns Hopkins. His father, not a successful man, was the local representative of a large national organization, banished to Dayton. A fat neurotic little man, a hysterical parent, a disciplinarian. Little Abe, when he was punished, was ordered to strip naked, and then he was beaten with the strap that held up his father's pants. Abe admired his mother, hated his father, despised his sister. But Keynes, to glance at him once more, had little to say of Clemenceau's family history. Clemenceau was a seasoned cynic; he loathed and distrusted the Germans; he wore gray kid gloves at the negotiating table. But we'll ignore the gloves—what I mean is that we aren't doing psychobiography here. This morning, moreover, Ravelstein was in no mood to go into the facts of his early life.

The Place de la Concorde was losing its freshness. The traffic below was thinner, but the June heat was thickening, rising. In the sun, our pulse beats were somewhat slower. Our conversation pausing, Ravelstein slumped for a while, his hemispheric eyebrows drawn upward. His lips, poised to say more, said nothing. He was momentarily elsewhere; he was subject to these intermittences. Though his eyes were open, it was possible that he didn't see you. As he seldom had a night of uninterrupted sleep, it wasn't unusual, especially in warm weather, for him to lapse briefly, to doze, to drop out, two long arms hanging over the sides of his chair, above the strange shapes of his mismatched feet. (One was three sizes bigger than the other.) And it wasn't only the broken sleep; it was the excitement, the wringing, the tension of his pleasures, of his mental life.

His fatigue this morning might have been due to the grand dinner he had given us the night before, an extraordinary party on the Place de la Madeleine, *chez* Lucas Carton. Digesting all those courses was bound to take it out of you. The main dish was chicken seasoned with honey and baked in clay. The ancient Greek recipe had recently been found by archeologists on an Aegean dig. We dined on this delicious dish, attended by no fewer than four waiters. The sommelier, with his badge of office on a chain of keys, supervised the filling of the glasses. Each course with its appropriate wine, while the waiters reset the china and the silver with the timing of acrobats. Ravelstein with his look of wild happiness, laughing and stammering, as he did when he was on a roll—interrupting every clause in his long sentences with "Thee-ah, thee-ah, thee-ah this is the finest cuisine in Europe—thee-ah, thee-ah Chick is a great skeptic when it comes to the French. He, thee-ah, thinks their cooking is all they have to show for themselves since the disgrace of the thee-ah, thee-ah 1940, when Hitler danced his victory jig in front of the Arc de Triomphe. Chick sees *la France pourrie* in Sartre, in the loathing of the U.S.A. thee-ah and worship of Stalinism, and in philosophy and linguistic theory. Thee-ah hermeneutics—he says *harmo*neutics—are little sandwiches eaten by musicians during the intermission. But you have to admit that you can't get a meal like this anywhere else. Notice how Rosamund is glowing. Now, there's a woman who relishes exquisite food and thee-ah, thee-ah, thee-ah restaurateur's presentation. Also Nikki, someone who can judge cookery—you wouldn't deny it, Chick."

This dinner had been laid on for me. It was Ravelstein's way of thanking his friend Chick for the support he had given him in the writing of his best-seller. The idea of the entire project, he said, had been mine, from the first. It would never have been done if I hadn't urged him to do it. This was always and handsomely acknowledged by Abe: "It was Chick who put me up to it."

THERE is a parallel between inner-city phenomena and the mental disarray of the U.S.A., the winner of the Cold War, the only superpower remaining. That's one way of boiling it down. This is what Ravelstein's books and articles had to tell us. He took you from antiquity to the Enlightenment, and then—by way of Locke, Montesquieu, and Rousseau, onward to Nietzsche, Heidegger—to the present moment, to corporate, high-tech America, its culture and its entertainments, its press, its educational system, its think tanks, its politics.

He gave you a picture of this mass democracy and its characteristic, woeful human product. In his classroom—and the lectures were always packed—he coughed, stammered, he smoked, bawled, laughed, he brought his students to their feet and debated, provoked them to single combat, examined, hammered them. He didn't ask "Where will you spend eternity?" as religious the-end-is-near picketers did, but, rather, "With what, in this modern democracy, will you meet the demands of your soul?"

This tall pin- or chalk-striped dude with his bald head (you always felt there was something dangerous about its whiteness, its white force, its dents) did not step up to the platform to bore you silly with the correct order of the epochs (the Age of Faith, the Age of Reason, the Romantic Revolution), nor did he present himself as an academic, or as a campus rebel encouraging revolutionary behavior. The strikes and campus takeovers of the sixties had set the country back significantly, he said. He did not court students by putting on bull-session airs or try to scandalize them—entertain them, actually, as histrionic lecturers do—by shouting "Shit!" or "Fuck!" There was nothing at all of the campus wild man about him. His frailties were visible. He obsessively knew what it was to be sunk by his faults or his errors. But before he went under he would describe Plato's cave to you. He would tell you about your soul, already thin, and shrinking fast—faster and faster.

He attracted gifted students. His classes were always full. So it eventually occurred to me that he had only to put on the page what he was doing viva voce. It would be the easiest thing in the world for Ravelstein to write a popular book.

Furthermore, to be perfectly frank, I was tired of hearing about his unsatisfactory salary, his byzantine borrowing habits, and the deals and arrangements he made by putting his treasures in hock. After following with more exasperation than interest the story of his beautiful Jensen teapot's five years in the hands of Cecil Moers, one of his own Ph.D.s—given as security for a five-thousand-dollar loan (and finally sold by this Ph.D. to some dealer for ten thousand)—I said, "How long can you expect me to put up with this boring dispute, this boring teapot, and all your other boring luxury articles? Look, Abe, if you're living beyond your means, a struggling aristocrat victimized by his need for beautiful objects, why don't you increase those means?"

At this, I recall, Ravelstein brought both his hands to his ears. The hands were finely made, the ears were gross. "What? Should I register with an escort service?"

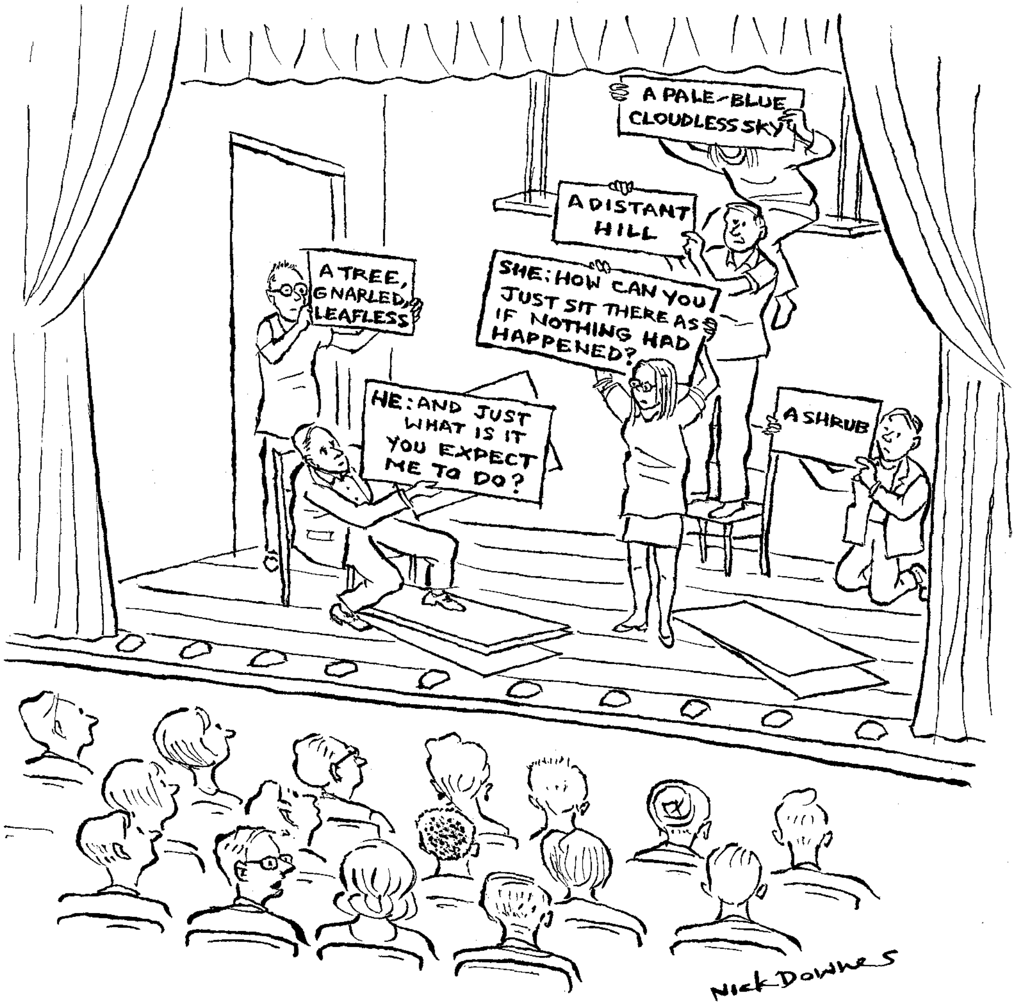
"Well, you're not much of a dancer. You might hire out as a dinner-table conversationalist. Like a thousand bucks a night . . . No, what I have in mind for you is a book. You could base a popular book on your actual class notes."

"Yah," he said. "Like Fielding's poor Parson Adams who goes to London to have his sermons printed. The parson needed money, and he had nothing to sell except his sermons. He had written them out. I don't even have notes. The advice you're giving me, Chick, is the advice of a much published author. You remind me of Dwight Macdonald. He said when Venetsky, one of his friends, was dead broke—absolutely at wit's end for money—'If you're in such a bind, Venetsky, why don't you sell one of your bonds? One can always do that.' It never would have occurred to him that Venetsky *had* no bonds. The Macdonalds had them. The Venetskys didn't."

"This is Macdonald as Marie Antoinette."

"Yes!" Ravelstein shouted, laughing. "Thee-ah old Depression joke about the hobo who pitches a rich old lady and says, 'Ma'am, I haven't swallowed a bite of food in three days.' 'Oh, you poor man, you must force yourself,' she says."

"I don't see how you can miss on this," I told Ravelstein. "All you have to do is prepare a proposal. At the very least you can get a small advance. It couldn't be less than twenty-five hundred. My


A PALE-BLUE CLOUDLESS SKY
A DISTANT HILL
A TREE, GNARLED, LEAFLESS
SHE: HOW CAN YOU JUST SIT THERE AS IF NOTHING HAD HAPPENED?
HE: AND JUST WHAT IS IT YOU EXPECT ME TO DO?
A SHRUB
Nick Downes

"They've remained remarkably faithful to the text."

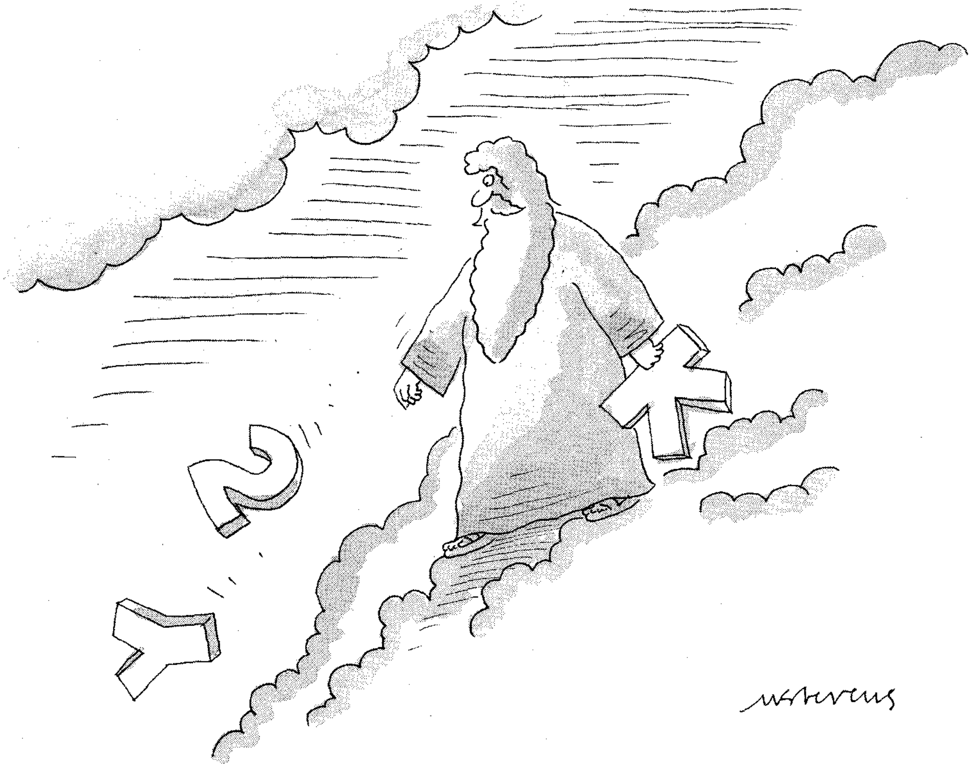
guess would be nearer to five thousand. Even if you never write a word of this proposed book, you'll pay off some of the debts and revive your borrowing power. How can you lose?"

He jumped at this. To bilk a publisher out of a few thousand bucks and at the same time free himself to wheel and deal was tremendously appealing. In outlook, he was anything but petty. But he did not expect my utopian brainstorm to come to anything. He had got used to the theatre of small-time intrigue where he could ironically, satirically dramatize and assert his exceptional stature and scope. So the outline was prepared and sent, a contract was signed, the advance was paid. The priceless Jensen teapot was gone for good, but Ravelstein's credit line was reopened. He wired money to Nikki in Geneva, who bought a new outfit at Gianfranco Ferré. Nikki had the instincts of a prince, and he dressed like one; in Nikki, Ravelstein saw a brilliant young man who had every right to assert himself. This was not a matter of style or self-presentation. We are speaking here of a young man's nature and not of his strategies.

To his own surprise, Abe Ravelstein then found himself writing the book he had signed up to do. The surprise was general among his friends and the three or four generations of students he had trained. Some of these disapproved. They opposed what they saw as the popularization or cheapening of his ideas. But teaching, even if you are teaching Plato or Lucretius or Machiavelli or Bacon or Hobbes, is a kind of popularization. The products of their great minds have been in print for centuries and accessible to a general public blind to their esoteric significance. For all the great texts had esoteric significance, Ravelstein believed and taught. This, I think, has to be mentioned, but no more than mentioned. The simplest of human beings is, for that matter, esoteric and radically mysterious.

One more odd bit from that evening at Lucas Carton. It ended with an after-dinner wine. We had come to the estuary of the feast and were once more facing the gulf of common fare. Ravelstein pulled out his French checkbook. He had never before had a Paris account. For long years he had been a tourist or mid-level worshipper of French civilization, but under a budgetary cloud—wanting to be a high-stepper, but broke. On our own side of the Atlantic there was a shadow parallel to this. As a Jew you are also an American, but somehow you are not. Imagine, however, reaching into your pocket to leave a grand-seigneur tip and finding little more than lint along the seam. Ravelstein, with his shaking hand, wrote the check in an ecstasy. Now the waiter had brought a dish of chocolate truffles with the bill, and it broke Ravelstein up to see Rosamund opening her purse and wrapping up the small peaked chocolates covered with cocoa dust. "Take 'em! Take every last one," said Ravelstein the Jewish comedian. He raised his cracked night-club voice. "Those are edible souvenirs. Every one you eat will bring this feast back to you. You can write it down in your diary and remember how bold and forward you were, stashing these truffles in your bag."

Ravelstein thought all the better of you for stepping out of line. Later he would occasionally say to Rosamund, "Don't give me that well-bred-young-lady-lace-paper-doily routine. I saw you swiping those chocolates at Lucas Carton." The fact is that he liked minor crimes and misdemeanors. Just under the surface of his preferences there were always ideas to be found. In this instance the idea was that uniform good conduct was a bad sign. What made Rosamund's scooping up of the truffles particularly appealing was that she was a very pretty, well-brought-up, mannerly, intelligent young woman. It pleased him that she had fallen in love with an old guy like me. "There's a class of women who naturally go for old men," he said. As I've already indicated, he was drawn to irregular behavior. Especially where love was the motive. He rated longing very highly. Looking for love, falling in love, you were pining for the half you had lost, as Aristophanes had said. Only it wasn't Aristophanes at all, but Plato in a speech attributed to Aristophanes. In the beginning men and women were round like the sun and the moon; they were either male-male, female-female, or male-and-female, and each being had two sets of sexual organs. So the myth went. They were proud, self-sufficient beings. They defied the Olympian gods, who punished them by splitting them in half. To be human was to be severed, mutilated. Man is incomplete. Zeus is a tyrant. Mt. Olympus is a tyranny. The work of humankind in its severed state is to seek the missing half. And after so many generations your true counterpart is simply not to be found. Eros is a compensation granted by Zeus—possibly for political reasons of his own. And the quest for your lost half is hopeless. The sexual embrace



gives temporary self-forgetting but the painful knowledge of mutilation is permanent. Like all, or most, of the students of my generation, I had read Plato's Symposium. Wonderful entertainment, I had thought. But I was sent back to it by Ravelstein. Not literally *sent*. But if you were continually in his company you had to go back to the Symposium repeatedly.

Anyway, it was just after midnight when we got up to go. Across the way there was a brilliant display of orchids. We were drawn by the lights and colors of the flower shop and we crossed the empty street. There was a vertical opening in the plate glass—two lines of brass edging—to let the flower odors into the carbon monoxide of the Place de la Madeleine. More French seduction. The hookers used to congregate in front of the great church, where state funerals are held. Ravelstein reminded me of this.

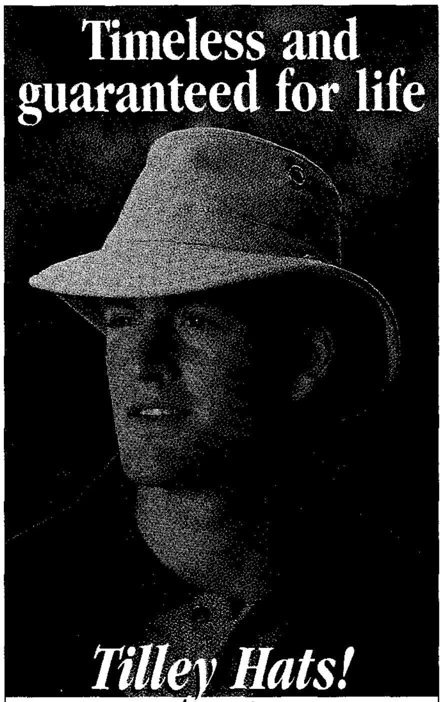
There was Ravelstein for you. If you didn't know this about him, you couldn't know him at all. Without longing, your soul was a used inner tube, maybe good for one summer at the beach, nothing more. Spirited men and women, the young above all, were devoted to the pursuit of love. By contrast, the bourgeois were dominated by fears of violent death. There, in the briefest form possible, you have a sketch of Ravelstein's most important preoccupations. I feel that I do him an injustice by speaking so simplistically. He was a very complex man. Did he really share the view (attributed by Plato to Aristophanes) that we are seeking the other that is a part of ourselves? Nothing could move him more than a genuine instance of this quest. Moreover, he was forever looking for signs of it in everyone he knew. Naturally his students were included. Odd, for a professor to be thinking of the kids in his seminars as actors in this staggering eternal drama.

His first move when his students arrived was to order them to forget about their families. Their fathers were shopkeepers in Crawfordsville, Indiana, or Pontiac, Illinois. The sons thought long and hard about the Peloponnesian War, about the Symposium and the Phaedrus, and didn't consider it at all strange that they were soon more familiar with Nicias and Alcibiades than with the milk train or the ten-cent store. Bit by bit, Ravelstein also got them to confide in him. They told him their stories. They held nothing back. It was amazing how much he learned about them. It was partly his passion for gossip that brought in the information he wanted. He not only trained them, he formed them, he distributed them into groups and subgroups and placed them in sexual categories, as he thought appropriate. Some were going to be husbands and fathers, some would be queer—the regular, the irregular, the deep, the entertaining, the plungers, the hustlers, the born scholars, those with a gift for philosophy. Lovers, plodders, gamblers, bureaucrats, narcissists, chasers. He gave a good deal of thought to all of this. He told the students that he was going to direct them to a higher existence, full of variety and diversity, governed by rationality—anything but an arid life. If they were lucky, if they were bright and willing, Ravelstein would give them the greatest gift they could hope to receive. It wasn't an academic program that he offered—it was more freewheeling than that. And the whole thing worked—on the whole his program was effective. Not one of his students became a Ravelstein in scope. But most of them were highly intelligent and very satisfactorily singular. He loved the kinkier students—they could never be kinky enough to suit him. But, of course, they had to know the fundamentals and know them diabolically well. "Isn't *he* the twisted one," he'd say about one or another of them. "Were you sent an offprint of his latest article—'Historicism and Philosophy'? I told him to put it in your box."

As I have said, we had planned today to discuss the memoir I was going to write, but this wasn't a good day for biographical details.

"I think I'd rather go along the Rue Saint-Honoré this morning," Ravelstein said. "I'd like your advice about a sports coat at Lanvin."

We left the penthouse. The moment was well chosen, because, several floors below, the elevator stopped and Michael Jackson and his people got in. There he was, in one of his spangled costumes, gold on black—a tight fit. His curls were fresh and his slim smile was chaste. De-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spite yourself, you studied him for signs of facial surgery. His air, I thought, was wistfully transitional. Golden boys coming to dust, like chimney sweepers.

Ravelstein, who was as big as any of the bodyguards—even bigger but certainly not as strong—loved this brief moment of contact. He was like that—the pleasure of a moment consumed him.

On the main floor, the guards cleared the way for Jackson as if they were doing the breaststroke. There were lots of people in the lobby. The big crowd was outside in the street, beyond the police barrier. But we were pressed together and held back behind braided gilt cords. The star walked out, delicately waving to the hundreds of shouting groupies. Abe Ravelstein didn't at all mind being behind the ropes.

Paris today was Paris as it should be. The kings who had laid out Versailles directed the architects to build the magnificent public spaces of the capital. These, today, were Ravelstein's setting. He was the grandee in the new order of things, carrying his credit cards and checks, willing to spend his dollars. The bills were paid by credit card and charged to his account at Merrill Lynch. Ravelstein seldom checked his statements. From time to time, Nikki, who wasn't supposed to do it, looked them over. His only aim was to protect Abe. It was thanks to Nikki that a major swindler in Singapore was discovered. Someone there had used Abe's Visa card to run up a thirty-thousand-dollar tab. "The signature was an obvious forgery," said Abe, not too upset. "Visa took care of it. International electronic swindles are the order of the day. The crooks learn to keep up with high technology like inventive bacteria that outwit the pharmaceuticals, while the brainy researchers in the labs pit themselves against the ingenuity of the versatile germs."

The Paris term for window-shopping is *lèche-vitrines*—licking the plate glass. This requires perfect leisure, and our breakfast had used up most of the morning. Still, we did linger over the displays of socks and neckties and made-to-order shirts. Then we walked a little faster. I said to Abe that these luxurious displays made me feel tense. Too many attractions. I couldn't bear to be pulled from all sides.

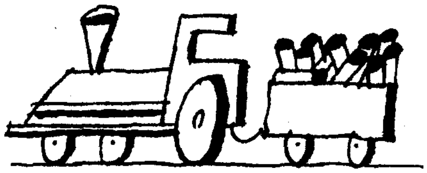
"I've noticed," said Ravelstein, "that since your marriage your dress standards have dropped. You once were something of a dude."

He said this with regret. From time to time he would buy me a necktie—never one that I would have chosen for myself. These gift ties were something of a put-down, to remind me that I was becoming dowdy. But there was more to it than that. Ravelstein was able to make a striking statement. Because of his large size, he could wear clothes with dramatic effect. To be really handsome a man should be tall. A tragic hero has to be above the average in height. I hadn't read Aristotle in ages, but I remembered this much from the Poetics.

In the Rue Saint-Honoré, loaded with all the glamour of French history and politics, what came back to me was that old music-hall number called "The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo." There is a flâneur who strolls in the Bois de Boulogne with an independent air. And he is debonair. And of course the people stare.

Things don't happen at all if they don't happen in Paris or aren't brought to the attention of Paris. That bursting old furnace Balzac established this as a first principle. What Paris hadn't vetted didn't even exist. Of course, Ravelstein knew too much about the modern world to agree with this. France, alas, was no longer the center of judgment, enlightenment. It was not the home of cyberspace. It no longer attracted the world's great intellects and all the rest of that cultural *schtuss*. The French had *had* it. De Gaulle the human giraffe sniffing down his nostrils. Churchill saying, about him, that England's offense had been to help *la France*. The lofty military creature gazing on the treetops of the late-modern world could not suffer the thought that his country needed help.

In Great Politics, of course, France today was bankrupt. Only the manner was left, and the French made the most of the manner, but they were bluffing: they knew they were talking twaddle. What they were still good at was the arts of intimacy. Eats still rated high—e.g., last night's banquet at Lucas Carton. In every *quartier*, the fresh-produce markets, the good bakeries, the charcuterie with its cold cuts. Also the great displays of intimate garments. The shameless love of fine bedding. *Viens, viens dans mes bras, je te donne du chocolat.* It was wonderful to be so public about the private, about the living creature and its needs. Slick magazines in New York imitated this but never got it right. . . . Yes, and then there was the French street life. American residential streets were humanly nine-tenths barren. Here humankind was still acting up, said Ravelstein. Ravelstein the sinner did have a taste for sexy mischief. He relished louche encounters, the fishy and the equivocal. For certain kinds of conduct, or misconduct, Paris was still the best place. If Ravelstein stammered, it was not from weakness but from overflow. The famous light of Paris was concentrated on his bald head.



"How far is the joint we're going to?"

"Don't be impatient, Chick. You always make me feel you have something more important to do than what you're doing now."

I didn't defend myself—didn't even try. Our destination, Lanvin, was close by, but we were detained en route by various shops. Opticians always held Ravelstein up. He was familiar with every sort of frame. There he wasn't alone. According to a survey, the average American woman has three pairs of sunglasses—"O, reason not the need," poor Lear's defense of superfluities. Abe loved specs; he bought them also as gifts. He gave me the folding kind that go into a small case made for an outer pocket. He swore off contact lenses after he lost one in a spaghetti sauce he was cooking.

"What does this Lanvin jacket have that your twenty others haven't?" I wanted to say. But I knew perfectly well that in Abe's head there were all kinds of distinctions having to do with prodigality and illiberality, magnanimity and meanness. The attributes of the great-souled man. I didn't want to get him started. Neither did he want to get started, this morning.

So we bought the jacket. A beautiful flannel, it was silky as well as substantial. The color was one I associated with Labrador retrievers—golden, with rich lights among the folds. You see such jackets advertised in *Vanity Fair* and the other fashion slicks, and they're usually modelled by unshaven toughs with the look of rough trade or of downright rapists who have nothing—but nothing—to do, other than be seen in all the glory of their dirty narcissism. You don't even think of such a garment on an unwieldy intelligent man. A little fat in the chest, maybe, or with love handles at the waist. It's actually a pleasant thing to see.

The price was twenty-five thousand francs, or four thousand five hundred dollars, and he put it on his Visa Gold card because he wasn't sure offhand about his balance at the Crédit Lyonnais. Visa protects you from gouging; it guarantees the legal rate of exchange for the day of the transaction.

In the street, he asked how the color held up in full daylight. He was deeply satisfied when I said that it was gorgeous.

Our next stop was Sulka, where he looked over the custom-made shirts he had ordered. They were to be delivered to the Crillon, each one in a durable plastic box. We then went to the Cristal Lalique showrooms, where he wanted to look at lighting fixtures for his walls and ceilings at home.

"Let's set aside half an hour for Gelot the hatmaker."

At Gelot's I broke down and bought myself a green corduroy fedora. Abe said I had to have it. "I like the look of it on you. You can do with a little assertion. You don't make enough of yourself," he said. "You're too fucking modest, Chick. It's unbecoming, because anybody who catches your eye sees that you're an overweening megalomaniac. If you're too stingy to do it I'll put it on my account."

"My parents had green sofas at home," I said. "Secondhand, but velvet. I'll pay for it myself. I'm buying this for old times' sake."

"It may be too heavy for June."

"Well, I expect to be still alive in October."

He was wearing his Lanvin jacket on the Rue de Rivoli. The great Louvre and the parks were on our left. The arcades were full of tourists.

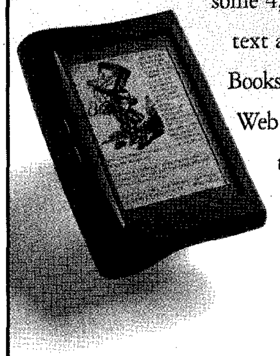
"The Palais-Royal"—Ravelstein gestured loosely toward it—"was where Diderot walked late every afternoon and where he had his famous conversations with Rameau's nephew." But Ravelstein was by no means like the nephew—that music teacher and sponger. He was above Diderot, too. I was always drawn to people who were orderly in a large sense and had mapped out the world and made it coherent. We had a buddy back in the States who liked to tell us, "Order itself is charismatic." Which is another way of saying "Music hath charms," et cetera.

WE had no need for lunch—the Lucas Carton ten-course banquet took away your appetite until dinnertime the next day—but we sat down to drink some coffee. Ravelstein was on his second pack of Marlboro cigarettes, and at the Café de Flore, which he patronized regularly, he ordered *un espresso très serré*. They packed it tight for him. But if his big fingers shook when he picked up the cup it was not because he had a case of nerves. What he had was an overflow of excitement. The caffeine was the least of it.

He was a curious man to watch at the table. His feeding habits needed getting used to. Mrs. Glyph, the wife of the founder of his department, told him once that he should never again expect her to ask him to dinner. She was, in her own right, a very rich lady, big on high culture and an entertainer of visiting celebrities. She had had R. H. Tawney at her dinner table, and Bertrand Russell, and some big-shot French Thomist whose name escapes me (Maritain?), and lots of literati, especially the French. Abe Ravelstein, then writing his dissertation, was invited to a luncheon to honor T. S. Eliot. Marla Glyph said to Abe Ravelstein as he was leaving, "You drank from your Coke bottle, and T. S. Eliot was watching—with horror."

Ravelstein told this on himself. And on the late Mrs. Glyph. "People who are self-glamorized invent their peculiar significance as they go along," Ravelstein said, "until they knit together a dazzling fantasy. They turn themselves into something like glorious dragonflies and whiz through an atmosphere of perfect unreality. Then they write essays, poems, whole books about each other. . . ."

But somehow I can't believe that drinking from a Coke bottle was the whole story. (And what was a Coke bottle doing on the table to begin with!) When Ravelstein came to dinner you had to reckon on a big cleaning job afterward—the spilling, splashing, crumbling, the nastiness of his napkin after he had used it, the pieces of cooked meat scattered under the table, the wine sprayed out when he laughed at a wisecrack, courses rejected after a single bite and pawed to the floor. An experienced hostess would spread newspapers under his chair. He didn't pay



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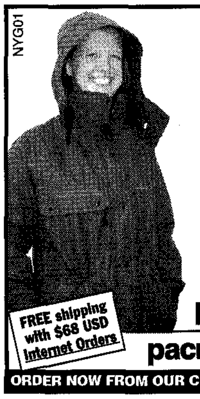

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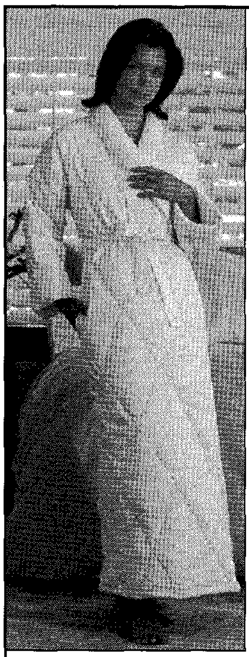

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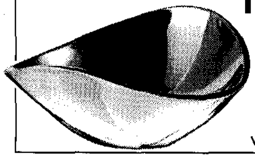

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HARRIET

Why did I say what I did to Harriet?
She was my age, nine, I don't think ten—
a kind of taunting I'd not do again.
Not to Harriet, who for me still
limps up the hill, jacket torn, stained skirt rent.
Harriet who wasn't beautiful yet.
Monster is what the mirror said to me—
I opened my mouth and Harriet fled.
Now those words are breath, there's no sound
but the hissing wind in the wild trees
and Harriet falling, as she didn't then.

—CYNTHIA ZARIN

much attention to such things. Of course, each of us has ways of knowing what is going on. Abe *knew*—he knew what to bring to full consciousness and what to brush aside. Objecting to Abe's table manners would be a confession of pettiness.

It amused Ravelstein to say, "She wasn't going to let any kike behave so badly at *her* table."

Professor Glyph, her husband, was a tall, small-headed, white-faced, smiling, grave man. His manner was decorous but his look was dazed. He was learned—famous for his scholarship. He was pampered by his wife and her Negro servants—three women—a laundress, a cook, and a parlormaid. The Glyphs were at home in London as well as in Paris. In Saint-Tropez, or some such place, the Scott Fitzgeralds had been their close neighbors. Glyph and his wife were not your common name-droppers. They had been a rich American Jazz Age couple. They had known Picasso and been received by Gertrude Stein.

For some reason, Ravelstein and I were talking about them at the Café de Flore. On especially enjoyable days I suffer an early-afternoon drop—fine weather makes it all the worse. The gloss the sun puts on the surroundings—the triumph of life, so to speak, the flourishing of everything makes me despair. I had never spoken of this to Ravelstein, but he probably sensed it. At times, he seemed to be intervening on my behalf.

"Glyph loved the Pont Royal—it was his favorite hotel. Very close by," Ravelstein said. "And I'll tell you—when Mrs. Glyph died, Glyph came to Paris to grieve for her."

"I turned up just after she died," I said. "Glyph would say 'my late wife,' and then, for laughs, he'd add that she was never punctual. Once he invited me to dinner and he asked on the phone whether I objected to *gens de couleur*. The guest was a gorgeous woman from Martinique—the wife of some famous art historian."

"You've always been lucky. You seldom make the most of your luck," Ravelstein said. He went for his third *espresso serré* when the waiter set it down; his big unskillful hand gripped the little cup as he carried it to his mouth. I would have given big odds on the outcome if a bet had been offered. Brown stains appeared on the lapel of his new jacket. It had been unpreventable—a fatality. He was still drinking the espresso; his head was far back. I kept my mouth shut, turning away from the large brown blot on the Lanvin coat. Another sort of man might have sensed at once that something had happened—someone, perhaps, who took money more seriously and would feel somehow the responsibility involved in the wearing of a four-thousand-five-hundred-dollar garment. Ravelstein's neckties from Hermès or Ermenegildo Zegna were dotted with cigarette burns. I tried to interest him in bow ties. I said they would be protected under his chin. He saw the point, but he wouldn't buy ready-mades: he had never learned to knot a "papillon" (as he called it). "My fingers are too unsteady."

"Ah, well," he said, when he at last saw that he had soiled his Lanvin lapel. "I've fucked up again."

The coffee spill was funny; it was pure Ravelstein. He himself had just said so. But I did not treat it as a comic incident. I suggested in a somewhat stifled manner that the stain might be removed. "The valet service at the Crillon probably can do it."

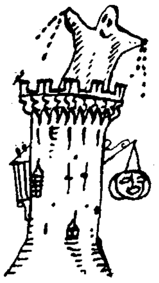
"You think so?"

"If they can't, it can't be done anywhere."

Obviously, my purpose in mentioning the Crillon's valet service was to comfort Abe for spilling the Flore's strongest coffee on his brand-new jacket. But Abe didn't want me to console him for being what he was. He would have thought better of me for laughing at his sputtering reckless slobbering, his gauche eager tremors. He liked broad comedy, old vaudeville routines, wounding remarks, brashness, and raw fun. So he didn't think well of my weak, liberal let's-make-it-all-better motive—my foolish kindness.

Abe put no stock in kindness. When students didn't meet his standards he said, "I was wrong about you. This is no place for you. I won't have you around." The feelings of the rejects didn't concern him. "Better for them if they hate me. It'll sharpen their minds. There's too much therapeutic bullshit, altogether."

He said that all kinds of creatures imposed on me and wasted my time. "Read any good book about Abe Lincoln," he advised me, "and see how people bugged him about jobs, about war contracts, franchises, consular appointments, and mad ideas during the Civil War. As President of the people he thought he was obliged to talk to these parasites, creeps, and promoters. All the while he was standing in a river of blood. War measures made him a tyrant—he had to suspend the habeas-corpus writ, you know. There was a higher thee-ah thee-ah need. He had to keep Maryland from joining the Confederacy."



Of course, my needs were different from Ravelstein's. In my trade you have to make more allowances, to take all sorts of ambiguities into account—to avoid hard-edged judgments. This reframing may resemble naïveté. But it isn't quite that. In art you become familiar with due process. You can't simply write people off or send them to Hell.

It occurs to me that this account of mine will lead to charges of misanthropy. Ravelstein was anything but a misanthrope or a cynic. He was as generous as they come—a reservoir, a source of energy for the students he accepted. Many came to him with the good democratic premise that he should oblige them all and share his ideas with them. Of course he refused to let himself be used, enjoyed—tapped by idlers. "I'm not the pipe at Saratoga Springs, where the Bronx Jews came in summer with cups to drink life-giving water for free—a remedy for constipation or hardening of the arteries. I'm not a free commodity or public giveaway, *am* I! Incidentally, the wonder-working water turned out to be carcinogenic. Bad for the liver. Worse for the pancreas." He laughed at this—not with pleasure.

Ravelstein's serious preoccupations "coexisted," to borrow a word from twentieth-century politics, with his buffoonery. Only his friends saw this side of him. He could be correct enough on important occasions, not as a concession to academic fussbudgets but because there were real issues to be considered, matters related to the purpose of our existence: say, the correct ordering of the human soul. He was as stable and earnest as any of the deepest and greatest of teachers. But even while teaching one of his Platonic dialogues he allowed himself to cut a caper.

Abe had excellent friends in Paris. He was well received by the *écoles* and *instituts*, where he lectured on French subjects in his own sort of French. In the States, he was controversial. He had more enemies at home than any normal person could want, especially among social scientists and philosophers.

But I have only the limited knowledge of these things that a nonspecialist can have. Abe Ravelstein and I were close friends. He was frank with me, with all his close friends. There were times when I simply didn't know what to make of his confidences. He was too spirited to be careful. To lose your head was a great-souled thing to do. I suppose, since we share a common humanity, that even in this age people will understand the term, though it finds few illustrations. Ravelstein counted on this understanding. "You can do it easy," he said to me. I agreed, more or less. ♦

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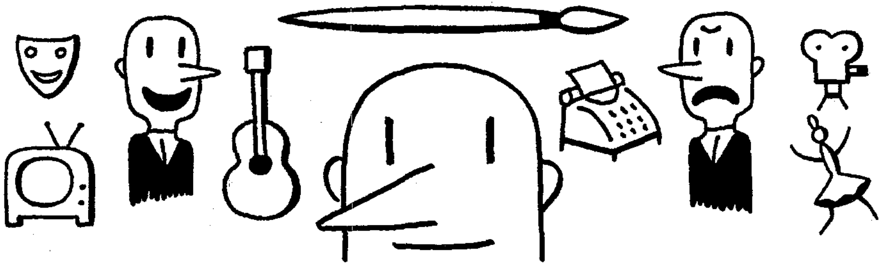


THE ART WORLD

BEAUTY CONTEST

The perils of pleasure.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

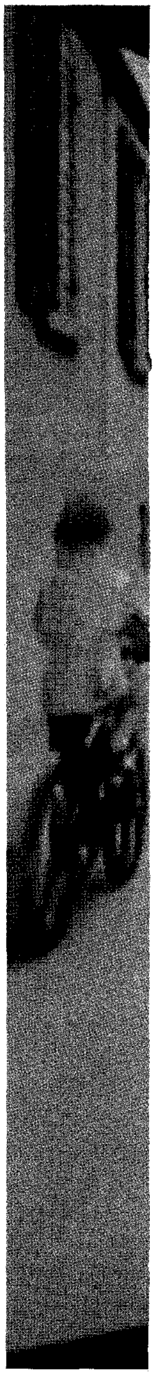
It was a beautiful day in Washington, D.C., when I travelled there to see "Regarding Beauty," a show of contemporary art at the Hirshhorn Museum. The Mall was a wide river of yellow sunshine. The Washington Monument in its present lacy sheath of scaffolding looked as breakably slender as a wand. I popped into the National Gallery. Rembrandt's "Lucretia" brought me close to tears. Then a Titian portrait started in on me—but time was short. As usual while walking in L'Enfant's maze of a city, I got lost. I asked a woman in a cherry-red coat for directions. She said, "I'm going that way. Follow me." I did so, slowing to her pace and towed along in a turbulent wake of redness amid greenery that was singed by encroaching autumn, under a furiously blue sky.

"Regarding Beauty"—which will run until January 17th and is well worth seeing, if only in order to argue about it—added little to my delights that day. This interests me. The show reflects a growing, wonderfully confusing debate in the art world about the value of aesthetic pleasure. The curators, Neal Benezra and Olga M. Viso, are not about to go whole hog for that value. After a period of thirty years in which art theory (and the training of curators) has carefully excluded—or downright insulted—the animal joy of the mind that is beauty, Benezra and Viso demonstrate nerve just by broaching the subject. Their selection favors works that, rather than being beautiful, are "about" beauty or, if beautiful, are presented in the antiseptic manner of chloroformed butterflies. The curators approach beauty as if it were a thorny idea. In a catalogue essay Benezra ventures that "today beauty might be praised as a concept that acknowledges regular shifts in cultural perception."

But beauty is not a concept. To begin with, it is a common word, defined in my dictionary as "the quality present in a thing or person that gives intense pleasure or deep satisfaction to the mind." Unless we are desperately sad or angry, we have occasion to use the word every day—almost always correctly, even when the pleasures and satisfactions in question are only a little bit intense and a little bit deep. Is beauty in the eye—and the brain and the gut—of the viewer? Sure. That's where it can do the most good. Beauty harmonizes consciousness from top to bottom. It is as organically vital as digestion. Beauty is—or ought to be—no big deal, though the lack of it is. Without regular events of beauty, we live estranged from all existence, including our own. Yearnings for beauty in one who is somehow incapable of it give rise to thoughts of suicide: beautiful surcease.

We don't depend on new art to provide us with beauty, which is just as well. Don't blame the artists for this. Ever since art lost the patronage of clerics and aristocrats who required beauty to justify their authority, it has been stuck with serving the scarcely voluptuous agendas of bureaucratic and educational institutions, novelty-craving commerce, political ideologies, and, in the best instances, rawly ambitious and audacious individuals. As a professional priority now, beauty belongs to organs of mass culture which must please or die. Glance at the ads in this magazine. Many are beautiful, albeit in a cause that may not stir the soul. Few artists today can muster uses for beauty that are as compelling as an advertising art director's home mortgage. We will have beauty galore in art if we can give it strong, cogent motives—beyond our mere, wistful hankering. Can beauty pay again? That's the ultimate issue of the beauty debate in the art world.

OK., what's beautiful in "Regarding Beauty"? My scoring tots up a few dozen of the show's eighty-eight works, representing nine of thirty-four artists: Matthew Barney (color photographs related to his celebrated "Cremaster" films); Vija Celmins (dense paintings of starry skies); Felix Gonzalez-Torres (a string of glowing light bulbs); Roy Lichtenstein (a cartoonish sunset); Agnes Martin (a blue-and-gold abstract painting); Charles Ray (a giant female mannequin with red dress and icy attitude); Gerhard Richter (subtle Photorealist landscapes); Pipilotti Rist (a video installation in which she insouciantly smashes car windows with a flower); and Andy Warhol ("Marilyn Monroe's Lips," "Triple Elvis"). Each of these works brought about in me, if only mildly, the simultaneous physical relaxation and mental arousal that are beauty's hormonal signature. They did so without boosts from the show's hanging, which gives equal weight to every item.



Pipolitti R

PHOTOGRAPH BY NIKLAUS STAUSS/COURTESY LUHRING AUGUSTINE AND GALERIE HAUSER & WIRTH, ZURICH

"There's no accounting for taste," it is said. Actually, there is every sort of accounting for taste, but there is no accounting for beauty. Beauty sails past the office in the brain where accounts are kept—and where failed beauty accumulates. Why don't perceptually ravishing works by Anish Kapoor and James Turrell make the cut? Kapoor's hole in the wall lined with gorgeous red pigment and Turrell's disorienting chamber of exquisite light effects entertain, certainly. My personal accounting staff explains that these works lack sufficient capital investment in the coin of devotion. They are glamorous rather than beautiful: hedonistic and only too confident of pleasing, like people who pride themselves on being irresistible. Beauty isn't beauty if it doesn't inspire awe for a specific proposition about reality. Beauty makes a case for the sacredness of something—winning the case suddenly and irrationally. It is always too late to argue with beauty.

Reviewing my list of the Hirshhorn show's gems, I note that all of them, except the painting by Agnes Martin, reach beyond fine art for their propositions, importing content from theatre (Barney), science (Celmins), interior decoration (Gonzalez-Torres), commercial art (Lichtenstein), product display (Ray), nature photography (Richter), rock video (Rist), and publicity (Warhol). It's as if each artist had coaxed a divine genie from a mundane bottle, then broken the bottle. What moves me is a feat of purification that could not occur unless it had impurities to start with. Beauty in art often builds on something gross. The cornball melo-

uciant video installation "Ever Is Over All" (1997), at the Hirshhorn Museum: Beautiful genies from mundane bottles.

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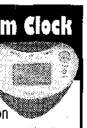

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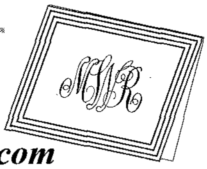

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drama of the scene in Rembrandt's "Lucretia"—a young Dutch model in a fancy dress, pretending that she is going to stab herself—is essential to the picture's gradually dawning paroxysm of terror and tenderness. Like many another great artist, Rembrandt finesses his medium's artificiality by embracing it. "Lucretia" is funny and holy—beautiful.

Much contemporary art communicates our visual culture's corrupted and fallen state as regards beauty. Anyway, so goes an argument that can be made for work in this show that delivers deliberately failed beauty straight to the accounting office for pointed analysis. Such work may indict the appreciation of feminine beauty, say, as a conspiracy to make women feel bad about themselves—as if making viewers feel bad about themselves evened the score. I don't think that stuff helps anybody. It is also boring. But authentic unhappiness demands respect. Cindy Sherman's ten self-photographic works in this show burlesque the formal rhetoric of moviemakers and Old Masters with magical skill and a suffering heart. I am reminded of the editor Shrike's advice to the hero of Nathanael West's "Miss Lonelyhearts": "When they ask for bread . . . give them stones." Sherman exalts our hunger for beautiful images even as she feeds us grotesqueries. The moral knowledge of her intoxicating art is not to be shrugged off.

"Regarding Beauty" thinks too much. It tries to put intellectual handles on a phenomenon that suppresses intellect altogether—to the understandable horror of theorists and scholars. Beauty isn't articulate. Beauty isn't nice. Beauty isn't fair. The curators, taking their eyes off the ball, reproduce vulgar misunderstandings about beauty, confusing it with lesser qualities of visual appeal, such as prettiness. They chose for the cover of their handsome catalogue an assemblage of silk flowers by Jim Hodges. It looks terrific, but its effect stands in relation to beauty as a friendly wave does to a punch in the nose. To say that beauty is mysterious to the thinking mind isn't enough. Beauty presents a stone wall to the thinking mind. But to the incarnate mind—deferential to the buzzing and gurgling body—beauty is as fluid, bright, and clear as an Indian-summer afternoon. ♦

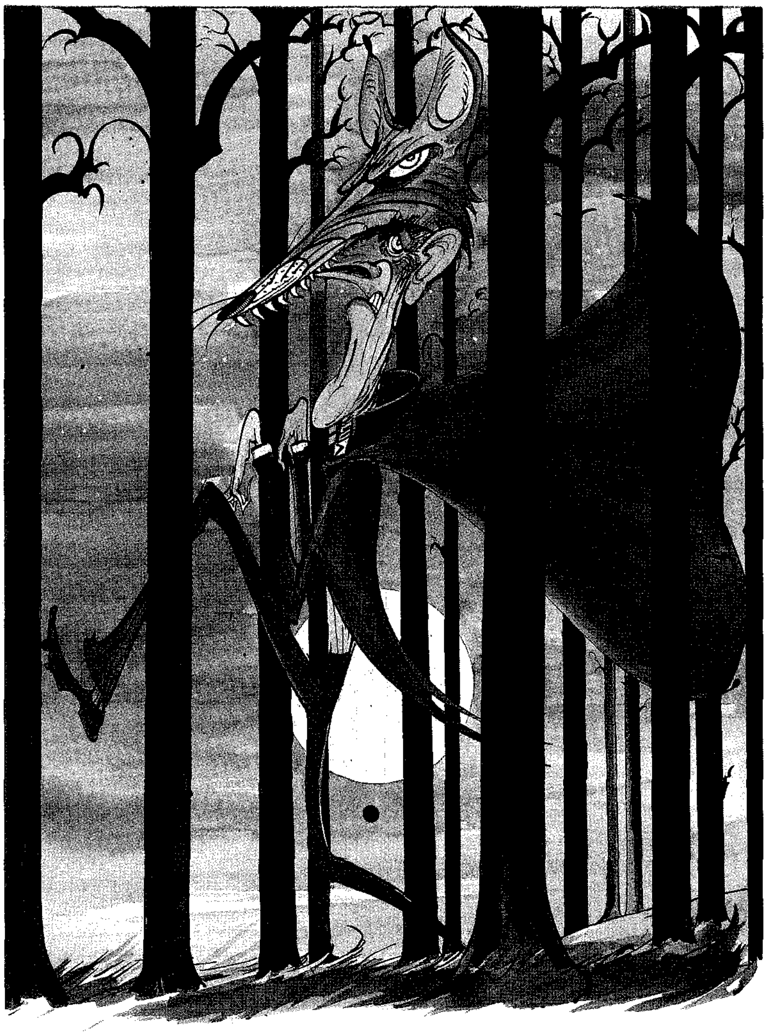
BOOKS

RECIPE FOR A WITCH-HUNT

Sex, power-mongering, politics, and the desire to settle old scores.

BY JOHN BANVILLE

ONE day in the spring of 1895, in the little village of Ballyvadlea in County Tipperary, in southern Ireland, Michael Cleary burned his wife to death, in the belief that she was a changeling. The case became an international *cause scandaleuse*, and continues to fascinate: the essayist Hubert Butler has written on it, Carlo Gebler has made it the subject of a novel, and, most recently, the Irish historian Angela Bourke has produced a perceptive study of the beliefs and events that led to the tragedy, which will be published next year in the United States by Viking. In a country such as Ireland, which only a decade ago suffered mass hallucination when large crowds of the devout saw statues of the Virgin Mary move, the burning of Bridget Cleary is an abiding reminder of how even a relatively sophisticated and forward-looking community can quickly succumb to primordial terrors.



Some people see Satan at work in the Duke of Edinburgh's behavior.

GERALD SCARFE

Bridget Cleary was no crone in cloak and pointed hat but a handsome woman of twenty-six who ran her own dressmaking business, wore stylish clothes, and possibly had a lover—unusual distinctions in a nineteenth-century Irish village of a handful of houses and some thirty souls. Certainly, Bridget's independence of mind was one of the causes of her dreadful death, but more immediate was the conviction that the real Bridget Cleary was "away with the fairies" and the creature masquerading as her was a demon. When she fell ill with a fever, a relative, Jack Dunne, who was a self-appointed expert on fairy charms and bewitchings, declared her to be a changeling. Others in the village took up the cry, and eventually, despite visits from priest and doctor, her husband became convinced that the woman lying ill in the marriage bed was not his wife. She failed to pass certain tests Cleary set her to prove that she was not a fairy—eating three pieces of bread and jam was one of them; she could manage only two—and he knocked her to the ground, set fire to her shift with a burning brand, poured lamp oil over her, and watched her burn to death. Afterward, he buried her in a shallow grave out in the fields. When police found the body, Cleary, along with eight of his friends and neighbors, was charged with murder, and was eventually sentenced to twenty years in prison.

As Nietzsche observed, it was Christianity that first painted the Devil on the world's wall. Belief in witchcraft and wizardry, however, is older than the oldest religions. In the volume on ancient Greece and Rome in the University of Pennsylvania's scholarly new series "Witchcraft and Magic in Europe," edited by Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark, there is a fascinating, if exhaustingly detailed, chapter by Daniel Ogden on binding spells in the ancient world. The Greeks and Romans used curse tablets and voodoo dolls (the Greek *kolossoi*) to undo their enemies or to win the objects of their desires—and the magic worked, according to no less an authority than Plato, whom Ogden quotes to the effect that witchcraft "persuades [its] victims that . . . they are being harmed by those who are able to work magic." This is where the real power of witchcraft lies—not in the witch or the warlock but in the fear and credulousness of the "victim."

Although the three volumes of the series so far published—the two others are on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and on the twentieth century—are intended mainly for scholars, there is much in them to interest the common reader. For instance, Ankarloo and Clark's introduction to the volume on the twentieth century contains the hair-raising non sequitur that "even the Duke of Edinburgh (for his presidency of the World Wide Fund for Nature)

[has] been attributed with aims similar to those of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sabbat goers." The unscholarly reader, dazed from so many facts and figures on the dark arts, cannot help letting his mind wander off to an image of the Queen's irascible husband, in a black cloak and a wolf's-head mask, loping through the woods at Windsor and scattering the sheep in terror on the greensward.

THE editors are right, of course; belief in witchcraft and magic will never completely die, no matter how technologically advanced we become. Even as the Enlightenment was training its intensest radiance into the shadowed corners of the human heart, and magic was scoffed at as "the impossible thing" by Voltaire and the philosophes, entire new disciplines of pseudoscience were coming into being, such as animal magnetism, physiognomy, and phrenology. "It seems that repudiation of the older sciences and forms of supernaturalism often led to their replacement by look-alikes," Ankarloo and Clark write. Indeed, Isaac Newton, the father of the industrial age, spent the last decades of his life in the study of alchemy and the search for the philosophers' stone.

We do not have the right to sneer, we moderns. The more deeply one reads in the history of witchcraft and witch-hunting, the more one realizes that before the discovery of antibiotics and the encephalogram it would have been difficult *not* to believe that magical forces were at work in, for instance, the inexplicable deaths of children, in the twitchings and cavortings of the suddenly mad, in the plagues that would sweep down on a city and quickly wipe out a third or more of the population. In "A Fever in Salem" (Ivan R. Dee; $24.95), Laurie Winn Carlson describes the symptoms first displayed by the young daughter and niece of the Reverend Samuel Parris, the pastor of Salem Village Church, in the beginning of 1692. She quotes a clerical colleague of Parris's describing how the children were "bitten and pinched by invisible agents; their arms, necks, and backs turned this way and that way, and returned back again, so as it was impossible for them to do of themselves, and beyond the power of any Epileptick Fits, or natural Disease to effect." In the face of such afflictions, how not to look about for a

BRIEFLY NOTED

PLAINSONG, by Kent Haruf (Knopf; $24). Like the vocal music that its title refers to, this novel about rural Colorado features a handful of voices in harmony: there is Victoria Roubideaux, a pregnant teenager abandoned by her mother; Harold and Raymond McPheron, the aging cattle farmers who give her a home; Maggie Jones, her irrepressible teacher; and restless Tom Guthrie, whose wife has just left him and their two young sons. Haruf's description of their straightforward generosity could easily seem contrived—and sometimes does—but he is also careful to include the small brutalities of community life. For these characters, consolation takes the form of trying harder, and we are surprised and convinced by their efforts.

MOTHERLESS BROOKLYN, by Jonathan Lethem (Doubleday; $23.95). "I got all of motherless Brooklyn up here," says Frank Minna, a small-time mobster, to the gang of orphans he recruits as helpers. They worship him, especially the story's narrator, Lionel—a smart boy who suffers from Tourette's syndrome. Years later, after Frank gets stabbed to death, Lionel goes looking for the killer, barrelling through an amusing jumble of milieus in which Upper East Side Buddhists harbor low-life crooks and Maine fishermen tangle with shady Japanese businessmen. But most rewarding in this delightfully oddball novel is the way Tourette's is a vehicle for the writer's love of language.

WAITING, by Ha Jin (Pantheon; $24). This suspenseful and bracingly tough-minded love story begins in China, in the early nineteen-sixties. The waiting is done by a nurse in a military hospital, a doctor she has become involved with, and the illiterate peasant woman he married, at his parents' insistence, and soon left behind in the countryside; through two turbulent decades, the doctor returns home each year to see if he can obtain a divorce. Told in the appropriately Chinese-flavored English of the poet-author, their trials are poignantly allegorical. No one questions the state's right to control its citizens' hearts—and loins—and Jin's characters are as free of Freudian insights as they are of the traditions of romantic love.

IN THE FAMILY WAY, by Lynne Sharon Schwartz (Morrow; $24). Schwartz may be our ablest chronicler of the Upper West Side. In this hilarious sendup, Anna, the addled matriarch of a family-owned building off Central Park West, pines for Oscar, the doorman; her daughter Bea, a violist turned caterer, manages the building; Bea's ex-husband, Roy, lives downstairs with his pregnant third wife; and his second wife, Serena, cohabits in the penthouse with Bea's sister May. Schwartz manages to stir into this mix some of the preoccupations of her previous, darker novels, such as the imperatives of even wildly unconventional family values.

A FLAME OF PURE FIRE: JACK DEMPSEY AND THE ROARING TWENTIES, by Roger Kahn (Harcourt Brace; $28). One doesn't have to be a fan of boxing to be enthralled by this story of a nice guy who didn't finish last. Dempsey's youth belongs to the history of American poverty, and Kahn portrays an ambitious youngster perfecting his skills against a background of seamy disorder. In 1919, his victory over Jess Willard won him the heavyweight championship and opened a decade in which sports became big business and athletes achieved the status of idols. Dempsey survived the perils of fistic celebrity—head injuries, a sensation-seeking press corps, and more than slightly dishonorable managers—to become a beloved elder statesman of sport.

AN EXHILARATION OF WINGS: THE LITERATURE OF BIRDWATCHING, edited by Jen Hill (Viking; $25.95). Along with the usual suspects (Thoreau, Audubon, Teddy Roosevelt), this lovingly organized anthology of notes on birds contains entries by the English diarist Gilbert White that read like haiku; T. W. Higginson's definition of a bird as "a song with wings"; and solutions to the mysteries of what nesting flamingos do with their legs and how fish hawks, or ospreys, seem actually to attract their prey. One contributor, Edmund Selous, describes how skuas, pirates among northern seabirds, so enjoy "brigandage" that they play at it with one another, moving the writer to burst out in mid-passage, "I love the humour of it. I love the birds."

SIN IN SOFT FOCUS, by Mark A. Vieira (Abrams; $39.95). The 1930 Production Code to Govern the Making of Talking, Synchronized, and Silent Motion Pictures was established by studio moguls as a preëmptive measure to head off the banning and censorship of their films. Forbidding everything from white slavery to lustful kissing, it was, in practice, little more than a sop. With enjoyable details and lavish photographs, Vieira chronicles the increasingly orgiastic excesses of the period, in movies like "The Sign of the Cross" and "The Story of Temple Drake." Then, in the summer of 1934, Joseph Breen, backed by the Catholic Legion of Decency, was brought in to administer the Code, and things quieted down as Hollywood learned the art of sophisticated innuendo for which its Golden Age is best remembered.

TRAPPINGS, by Richard Howard (Turtle Point; $14.95). To his numerous voices, both actual and fictional, Howard here adds the complaints of Milton's daughters and, extending Browning's "My Last Duchess," the cautions of the Count of Tyrol's envoy against the murderous Ferrara. Typically dramatic in nature, these new poems wink one moment and weep the next, mimicking with equal acuity a gardener who sprays coyote urine as a deer deterrent and the poet Muriel Rukeyser, whose old computer the author comes to own. Elegiac, playfully formal, and attuned to the ways in which speech reveals character, Howard shows with his delicate phrasing how our hearts truly reside in our throats.

cause, and, looking about, how not to make certain that a cause shall be found?

The two little girls were not the first in the region to suffer from this strange and frightening malady. In 1688, four children of the Goodwin family, of Boston, had displayed similar symptoms. Various medicines were tried on them, without success; then the clergy was brought in to perform a day of prayer, and on that very day the youngest child, aged five, was "miraculously cured." If what ailed the children did not have a physical cause, it was reasoned, then some form of magic must be at work, and it must be a witch who was working it. The Boston magistrates settled upon Goody Glover, an Irish washerwoman—somehow, the Irish always seem among the first to get it in the neck—whom Cotton Mather dubbed the Hag, and who, as well as being Irish, had the added misfortune of being a Catholic. She was tried for casting spells on the children, and hanged. Eventually, with the benefit of still more prayer, the rest of the children recovered, a result attributed to the demise of Mrs. Glover.

The Salem-witch craze proper, in which nineteen people, most of them women, were hanged, lasted for less than a year, ending in September of 1692, but, as Carlson notes, the first New England witch trial had taken place as early as 1647, coinciding with the peak of the witch-hunting frenzy in Europe. In the period between the sixteen-forties and the end of that terrible summer in Salem,

> something unexplainable and distinct from known illness caused people *and* domestic animals to behave strangely. This unseen force caused people to fall into fits, feel pain in their arms and legs like biting and pricking, bark like dogs, grovel on the ground like hogs, and even turn suicidal. Psychotic hallucinations were frightening enough, but when an individual's eyes twisted to the side, and arms and legs stiffened in awkward postures for hours, or blood wept from marks on the skin that clearly looked like bites, everyone knew that something was terribly wrong.

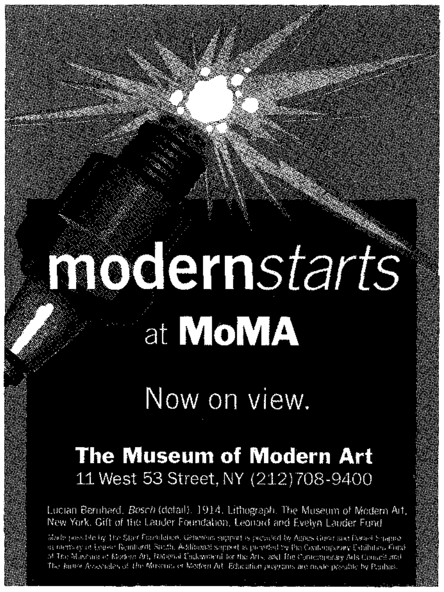
The modern assumption has been that these manifestations were the result of mass hysteria—hardly much of an improvement on saying that they must be due to magical influence. Carlson has another and, as far as a layman can judge, plausible explanation: the "possessed" of Salem, and perhaps of many other places where witchcraft was suspected, were in thrall not to devilry but to a mysterious disease of the brain, encephalitis lethargica, popularly known as sleeping sickness. An epidemic of the disease, the symptoms of which, Carlson insists, are nearly identical to those experienced in Salem and elsewhere, swept the world between 1916 and 1930, claiming more than five million victims, some of whom are even yet under hospital treatment. (Oliver Sacks wrote vividly about a group of them in his book "Awakenings.")

Carlson's study is meticulously researched, and the author marshalls her arguments with clarity and persuasive force. Yet even she would not pretend to believe that the witch-hunts of the past, in which it is estimated that between forty and fifty thousand people, three-quarters of them women, were tortured and put to death, could have been exclusively the result of an infection of the brain. Writing in the second volume of "Witchcraft and Magic in Europe," Roy Porter sets out the complexity of the issue:

> It is now generally accepted that the witch-hunts and trials which peaked in the seventeenth century resulted from the superimposition upon traditional supernatural outlooks and practices of a new demonology, associated with Reformation and Counter-Reformation theologies, Renaissance magic, and renewed crusades against heresy and heathenism—movements reinforced by the advent of printing and the spread of literacy, the centralizing juridical and administrative ambitions of the new monarchies, and much else.

It is that last-mentioned force, monarchical ambition, which was one of the main causes of the downfall of Urbain Grandier, the so-called Devil of Loudun, according to the latest commentator on this notorious and ghastly affair. Robert Rapley's "A Case of Witchcraft: The Trial of Urbain Grandier" (McGill-Queen's; $29.95) is a superb unravelling of the story of Grandier, the handsome and charismatic parish priest of the church of Saint-Pierre-du-Marché, in Loudun, in the province of Anjou. This is a work of impeccable scholarship, yet it has the verve and narrative drive of a first-rate historical novel; one is reminded throughout of a forgotten masterpiece of historical fiction, Lion Feuchtwanger's "Jew Süss" (1925)—Grandier's fate is distinctly reminiscent of the rise and fall of Feuchtwanger's doomed, hubristic hero.

Grandier was the son of a solid bourgeois family; his father had been a lawyer, and his uncle was a priest of high



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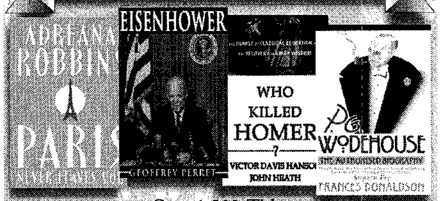

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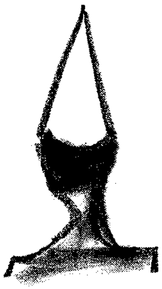
social standing in a town near Bordeaux, where Urbain was born. He was educated by the Jesuits, who foresaw a great future for him. He was ordained at the age of twenty-five, but continued his studies for two years, until his father died and left the family in straitened circumstances. The Jesuits, ever careful of their own, appointed the young man to the lucrative benefice of Loudun. The arrival, in 1617, of this brilliant, polished, and witty prelate was a significant mark in Loudun's social register, and he was quickly welcomed into the grandest houses of the town. One of these was the home of the magistrate Louis Trincant, and it was here that Grandier committed his first and, as it would prove, fatal error. As Rapley, ever scrupulous, points out, it is not certain that it was the priest who made Trincant's daughter, Philippe, pregnant, though much of the evidence points to him. That a young woman of good birth should become pregnant outside marriage was bad enough, but that the father of her child should be a priest, and one with such a high profile as Père Grandier, was a disgrace that at all costs must be kept hidden. Philippe was soon married off to a handily complaisant young man, and Grandier learned to steer well clear of Trincant, who from that time on became his unrelenting enemy.

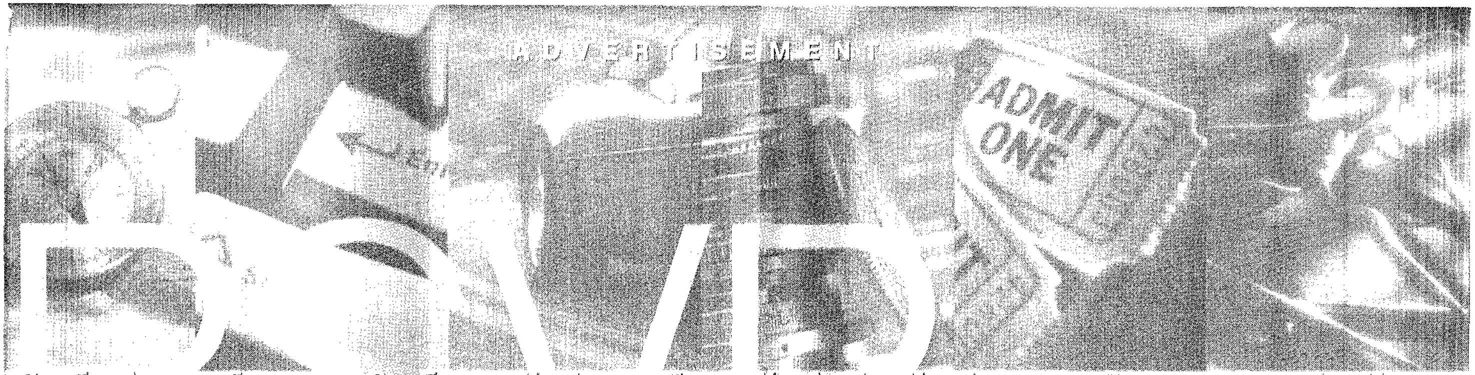
Grandier's other early mistake was made a year after his arrival in Loudun. Taking part in a church procession in the town was a bishop, five years older than Grandier, who had fallen out of favor at court and was kicking his heels in exile at his family's home near Loudun. Grandier, with Coriolanian hauteur, set himself in the procession ahead of the disgraced bishop, a slight that the man would remember later, when he had risen to become Louis XIII's first minister and France's most powerful politician—Cardinal Richelieu.



Trincant and his party first tried to destroy Grandier by bringing trumped-up charges of public licentiousness against him, charges that the clever and self-confident priest was able to disprove. The outraged father bided his time, however, and in 1632, after a devastating visitation of plague upon the town—in which Grandier showed himself a fearless ministrator to the sick and dying—the opportunity came not only to unseat the priest from the high horse of his pride but to destroy him utterly. Word of the charges of lewdness against him had penetrated the cloisters of the Ursuline convent in the town, where seventeen nuns, all young women of good families, were sequestered from the world. When the nuns began to display the characteristics of possession—characteristics very like those recorded among the bewitched of Salem, including convulsions, mysterious woundings, and periods of paralysis—it was not long before Grandier's name began to be spoken by them, and especially by their mother superior, the thirty-year-old Jeanne des Anges, in the throes of their afflictions. Whether the idea of the priest as the Devil's agent came instinctively to the frantic minds of these women, or whether it was planted there by some of the supporters of Trincant, it was all one: Grandier was charged with witchcraft, and so began the long and intricate process that would bring him to the stake.

Grandier, suffering from the delusion that a higher authority must inevitably deliver him justice, took his case to the Parlement, in Paris. What he did not know, or did not take sufficient cognizance of, was that the parliament and the King were engaged in a power struggle, one that Richelieu was determined the King should not lose. Already Grandier had put himself in the wrong with Richelieu, not only through that long-ago slight in the Loudun procession. In the wider framework of French politics, Richelieu was playing a deep game. In order to stamp out the final traces of feudalism, and consolidate the King's power throughout the realm, the Cardinal had ordered that the defensive walls of all French towns should be razed. In Loudun, where half the population was Huguenot, the debate over whether or not the walls should come down had been raging for years. The liberal-minded Grandier, who had many friends among the Huguenot community, had put himself in the anti-Cardinalist camp—and Richelieu knew it.

Rapley's scrupulousness has already been mentioned, and he displays an admirable fairness toward all concerned in this terrible business, even the worst of



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the weasels who knowingly conspired in the destruction of an innocent man. Trincant's genuine grievance is never lost sight of, the hysterical and possibly mischievous nuns are treated with restraint, and Richelieu, it is surmised, honestly believed that Grandier was a wicked man, who should be destroyed. But even the most studiously unjudgmental historian cannot do other than condemn Jean Martin, Baron de Laubardemont, the Eichmann of this small holocaust. A lawyer and bureaucrat, he was the Cardinal's man, and was sent to Loudun to oversee the razing of the town walls. Urged on by Trincant and his party, and backed by Richelieu and the King, he brooked no resistance in his determination to see Grandier annihilated.

Grandier endured his death, and the atrocious tortures that went before it, with superhuman fortitude, forgiving his tormentors, and handing himself into God's care with the gentleness of one of the early church martyrs, upon whom he must have modelled his own behavior in the face of the contumely of his enemies and the agonies of the stake. Afterward, Philippe Trincant, who had witnessed Grandier's execution from a front-row seat, was asked what she thought of the occasion. "It was all right," she is said to have replied, "but I found the smell disagreeable." Reading Robert Rapley's harrowing account of the last hours of this flawed hero, one finds oneself wondering if perhaps the Devil was indeed at work in Loudun that day, though surely Urbain Grandier, for all his faults, was no more of his party than was that other innocent victim of the flames, poor Bridget Cleary. ♦

THE THEATRE

NOTHING LIKE A DAME

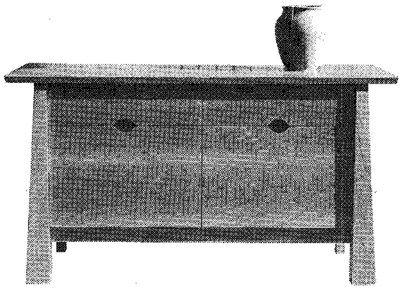
The sublime aggression of Edna Everage.

BY JOHN LAHR

THERE is something exquisite, daring, and liberating about a genuinely malicious wit. The price we pay for living in civilized society is the repression of our aggressive, infantile instincts; our anarchic impulses must be contained. But we pay top dollar to see those who are in touch with these murky vindictive feelings express them elegantly for us. Dame Edna Everage, the sublime comic creation of the Australian Dadaist and dandy Barry Humphries (with whom, in 1989, I spent a month backstage, for a book), is a case in point. Early in "Dame Edna: The Royal Tour," at the Booth, she reminds the American audience that, as an Aussie, she has license to kill. "You can't be politically incorrect," she brays. "But I can. I can even tell the truth." She adds, "Remember that? That's taking you on a walk down memory lane."

Dame Edna is transparently monstrous; to adopt her penchant for florid alliteration, she is a virago of vitriol, a harpie of happiness, a megastar of maliciousness. At her entrance, Dame Edna—dressed in a bulky pink-and-silver evening coat and looking like some sort of Fabergé egg with fangs—is revealed in all her glory, bearing ill will to all men. "I was born with a priceless gift," she confides to her "possums," as she calls the audience. "The ability to laugh at the misfortunes of others." She adds, "That keeps me happy twenty-four hours a day."

Dame Edna, who is not a drag act but a character actor in a dress who makes points about life, is a bit like Tinkerbell: she is real if the audience believes in her. It's a testament to the power of the character and of Humphries's performance that she compels instant belief. (When, a few years ago, Dame Edna's autobiography, "My Gorgeous Life," was published in England, it was on the *nonfiction* best-seller list.) For Americans who may know Dame Edna only from her TV talk show, which gives no sense of her real theatrical brazenness,



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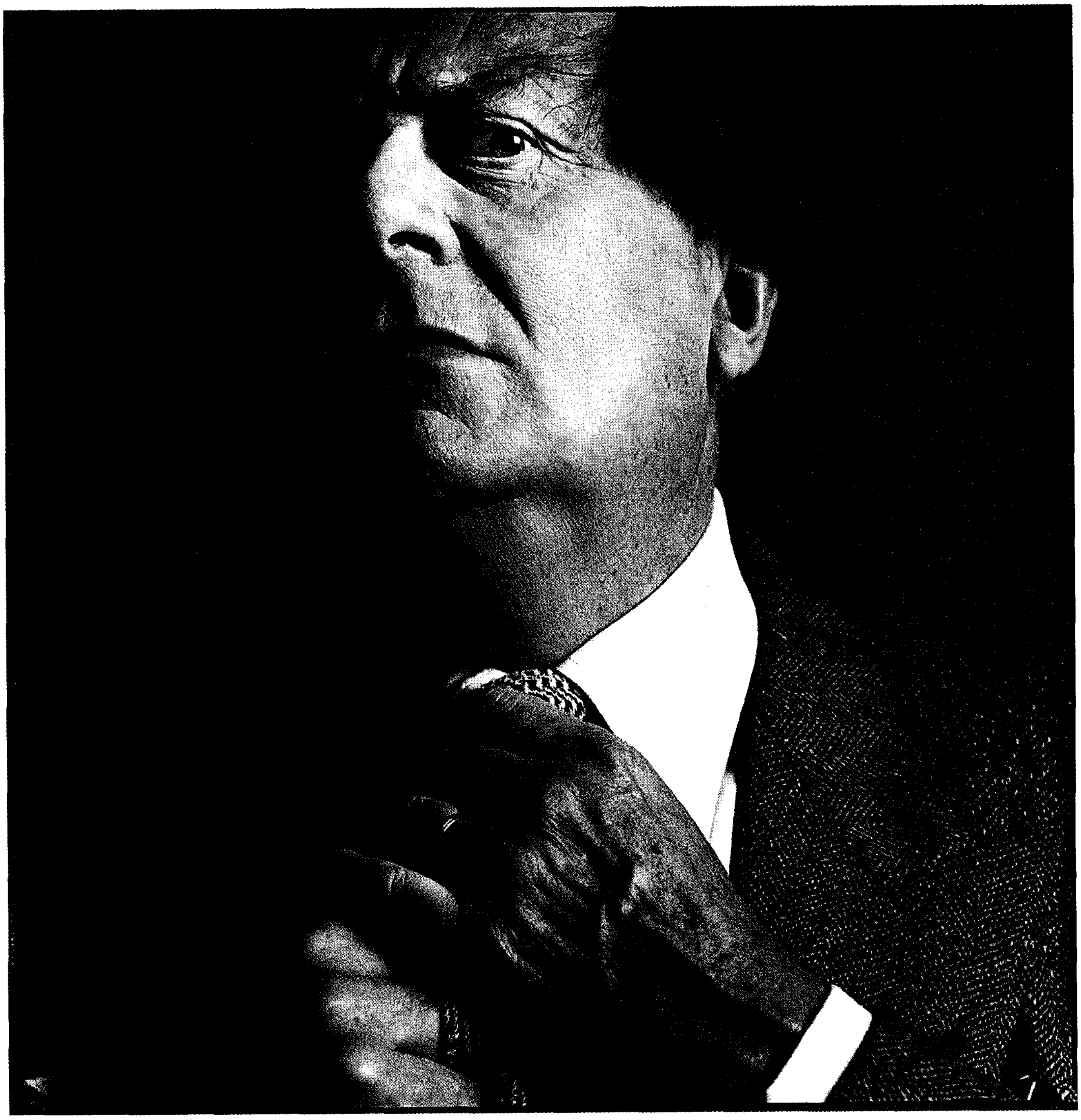


Barry Humphries: His Dame Edna is not a drag act but a character actor in a dress who makes points about life.

© NIGEL PARRY / CPI

she provides a short filmed history of her rise from frumpy fifties Aussie housewife to the glitzy, caterwauling international glamour-puss that the audience has paid to see. The film is intercut with images that put Edna in the history of her time; she is seen with the Royal Family, the Clintons, and the Pope, and shown hobnobbing with her real-life peers—Richard Gere, Joan Rivers, Mel Gibson, Roseanne, Charlton Heston. Before Edna levels her forked tongue at us, we see her trading barbs with Roseanne. “Is there anything you wish you hadn’t . . . eaten?” she asks.

Dame Edna is a hostile sharpshooter loudly protesting her innocence. She is always browbeating the audience for its callousness: “Don’t be so insensitive!”; “Don’t be so rude!” At one point, feigning fear of patrons falling from the steeply raked cheaper seats in the balcony and causing “a Niagara of nonentities,” Dame Edna scolds the “paupers”: “Don’t lean forward! I warned you!” For Broadway, she gives this crowd a new, “upscale” epithet: “Les Misérables.” “I’ll glance up there from time to time,” she says. “In strict proportion to the amount that you have paid.” The game is a subtle one. Humphries, the aesthete, can both vent his disdain and mock it; and, in the presence of the myopic Edna, the audience, too, can feel an exhilarating superiority. This allows it to relax, and, in turn, allows Dame Edna to throw some astonishing punches in under its lowered guard.

Humphries gets the audience—all of

it—to play with Dame Edna. Slowly, in the course of the evening, the audience becomes the character; Dame Edna's conversation with it becomes the drama. "Isn't it funny," she said to Al and Myrna, two viewers coaxed up onstage to eat a meal in front of eight hundred people while she went on with her routine. "You paid to come to a show; and you *are* the show." Indeed. Humphries, who has been packing them in all over the world for nearly fifty years, has an awesome prowess with audiences. He is almost single-handedly bringing the vaudeville tradition into the twenty-first century. He's alert and swift and smart: like a master angler, he trolls the audience, fishing for laughs while deepening the collective image of the characters he has singled out. The night I saw the show, Dame Edna caught a man in the second row reading his program and immediately tagged him "Bookworm." "How discourteous of me," she added. "I suppose you're looking to see what's next—it could be you." Carol, "a little vivid woman" from New Jersey, fessed up to having a tattoo of a lovebird on her ankle. "Does it commemorate any particular ornithological experience?" Dame Edna asked. And Ruth, a bridge player from the East Sixties, was lured into a discussion about owning her home. "It's costly living in New York," Dame Edna sympathized. She added, "You've saved on clothes." Instead of being humiliated, Ruth and all the other collaborators find themselves empowered by the laughter they're suddenly able to inspire. By the end of the evening, Edna has infantilized her happy audience. As is her tradition, at the finale she hurls dozens of gladioli, which she calls the Australian national flower, into the theatre; on her command, the audience sings, waves, stands, shakes the stems, and thrusts the flowers high into the air. At one point, as Dame Edna hectored the viewers to sing along with their gladdies swaying in unison right and left, a man in the front row stood up from his seat and tried to touch the tip of Edna's flower with his own. The stem broke. "It's a tragic case of gladiolus interruptus," she said.

Humphries is really a folklorist. (Besides Dame Edna, he has put two other characters—Sir Les Patterson and Barry McKenzie—into the popular imagination of two continents.) Dame Edna's myth is an ongoing saga. For those who follow her exploits, I'd be shirking my critical duties if I didn't report that in this show Edna, always teetering on the brink of fashion, confesses that she was "abused." The culprit was her father's wife, who wouldn't let her listen to the radio. Not to be outdone by Sir Tom Stoppard, Dame Edna has also discovered that she's Jewish. "Eat! Eat! Eat!" she barked at Al and Myrna, who were laughing too hard to swallow. "I'm feeling more Jewish every minute." She added, "Even as a little girl, I knew I was Jewish. I'd play mah-jongg and no one taught me." Her son Kenny has moved with her to New York: "He's the Australian Calvin Klein." She has a blind spot about her son's sexual proclivities, and she brings down the house singing about New York: "I never thought that I would see so many/Friends of Kenny./ I never thought I'd meet so many macho men/ Exactly like my Ken." Dame Edna, who has conquered Europe and Australia, is clearly feeling her oats in America, and celebrates this in song. She fancies herself the Cole Porter of the Antipodes, and her rhymes gleefully swallow up everything in her path. Including, to my amazement, me:

> Spin doctors have spun me
> Dominick's Dunne me
> I'm even a book by John Lahr
> Call me old-fashioned
> I'm a born-again Broadway star.

Of course Dame Edna is a star; she is also a ferocious satire on stardom. It is a generous and gallant performance. ♦

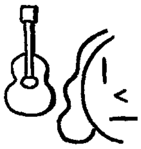
OLAF HAJEK

MUSICAL EVENTS

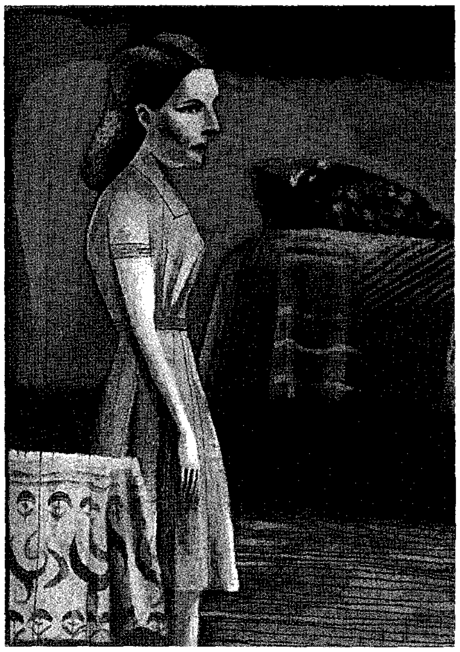
BROOKLYN BRIDGES

A nostalgic "View from the Bridge"; Feldman's towering "Quartet II."

BY ALEX ROSS



RED HOOK, Brooklyn, the setting for William Bolcom's new opera, "A View from the Bridge," is a beautiful ghost of a neighborhood. Its tenements and warehouses are set against an unexpectedly large panorama of water and sky, and on bright afternoons its crumbling red brick façades give off a melancholy glow. Red Hook was once a thriving port colony—"the gullet of New York swallowing the tonnage of the world," as Arthur Miller writes, in the play on which Bolcom's opera is based. The longshoremen who worked the docks created the rough-and-tumble world where Al Capone got his start. By the nineteen-fifties, the period in which the play is set, Red Hook had begun to lose its business to container docks on the Jersey shore. Eddie Carbone, a longshoreman who can find work only sporadically, broods in his armchair: he has turned in on himself and developed a grotesque, home- and life-wrecking desire for his niece. His fate is a malign growth on empty time. Bolcom captures his state of mind with a soft, winding figure in muted strings—music that pads around in harmonic



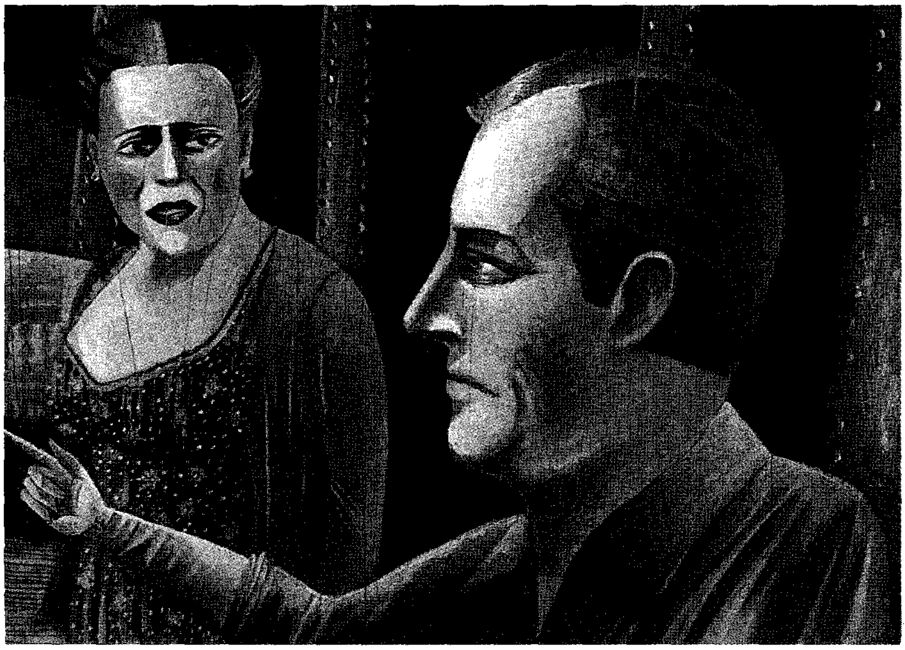
Juliana Rambaldi (left), Cather

limbo, like a stray cat on a weed-covered street.

Miller's forty-four-year-old play, as seen in its 1997 Broadway revival, remains a living, harrowing drama. Bolcom's opera, which recently had its première at Lyric Opera of Chicago, is more of a period piece. The production, by the director Frank Galati, with sets and costumes by Santo Loquasto, wraps the story in historical gauze. Grainy black-and-white photographs are projected behind an industrial set. We're in a recollected, half-mythic Brooklyn, not a real one. The libretto—a collaboration between Miller and the playwright Arnold Weinstein, who also wrote the text for Bolcom's first major opera, "McTeague"—is charmingly dated. Eddie says things like "Now, listen, both a yiz" and "That's the t'anks I get?" Marco, the immigrant who becomes Eddie's nemesis, exclaims, "To America I sailed on a ship called Hunger." Bolcom's score offers up a rich anthology of dance tunes and ballads.

Occasionally, I wondered whether the opera might have packed more punch if it had been set in an immigrant community of the present. Eddie Carbone is an ordinary man who becomes a vehicle for ancient tragedy: he is ignorant of his desires, yet his desires dictate all his actions. He seems obsessed not merely with Catherine, his niece, but also with Rodolpho, the gentle, effete young man who takes Catherine from him. This is not dated stuff: similar tensions smolder in the current film "American Beauty." At the same time, "View" has the force of classical drama. But in the Chicago production the confrontation of mythic tragedy and modern sexuality has been shrouded in period atmosphere. Kim Josephson, as Eddie, deployed an effective array of glowering looks and violent gestures, but many of them were trademarked years ago by Jackie Gleason. At times, Miller's story seemed in danger of becoming precious—threatening to depict the collision of a ship called Hunger and a streetcar named Desire.

Yet Weinstein, a selfless and sage librettist, knew what he was doing as he added layers of nostalgia: he was playing to the strengths of the composer. Bolcom, who is, in his spare time, a walking encyclopedia of popular song, writes catchy tunes with a flick of the wrist. He is also able to install his winsome ideas in a darker, more imposing musical structure. I can't remember seeing a recent new opera as taut as this one: not a single note is wasted. The piece is a pleasant contrast to André Previn's wobbly "A Streetcar Named Desire," which opened last year's opera season in San Francisco. It is also tighter than Bolcom's own "McTeague," which Lyric Opera introduced in 1992. In that adaptation of the Frank Norris novel,



fitano, and Kim Josephson in Lyric Opera of Chicago's "A View from the Bridge."

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Bolcom's writing was wilder and grander, his imagination running riot in the desert landscapes in which the protagonist meets his fate. In "View," Bolcom zeroes in more intently on his characters' inner lives. He works a Brittenesque psychological spectrum, pitting innocence against brute lust. (Eddie Carbone has more than a bit of Peter Grimes in him.) And, like Britten, Bolcom uses "damaged" tonality and bitonal dissonances to show a mind that is desperately at odds with reality.

The Chicago cast was enthusiastic and capable. Josephson could have exuded more menace as Eddie, but his singing had a potent, conversational flow. Catherine Malfitano seized the role of Eddie's wife, Beatrice, with her usual intensity. Gregory Turay, as Rodolpho, showed off a fine-grained, Irish-style tenor. Juliana Rambaldi, as Catherine, was a bright-voiced beacon of innocence. Dennis Russell Davies conducted passionately. "A View from the Bridge" falls short of greatness, but it does not aim for greatness, either. It wears the ruddy complexion of a work that has achieved exactly what it set out to do.

MORTON FELDMAN talked like a character in a Broadway play. He may have been one of the most formidable American composers of the last fifty years, but he was also, unmistakably, a New York guy, a Brooklyn guy. Before receiving his first academic appointment, he worked part time at his uncle's dry cleaners, and he had the right accent for the job. In one interview, he said, "I want to be the foist great composer that is Jewish." Whatever he may have meant by that, he had enormous ambitions, and his later works were vast, even Wagnerian, in scale. His "For Philip Guston" (1984) requires some four to five hours of continuous playing; his "String Quartet II" (1983) lasts six. You suspect that Feldman aspired to be the Jewish composer who wrote a piece that was longer than "Parsifal."

When the Kronos Quartet gave the world première of "Quartet II," it performed only a condensed, three-hour version. Earlier this month, the Flux Quartet, a brave young group in the Kronos mold, played every last note of the thing in the Great Hall at Cooper Union. The performance began at 7:40 P.M. and ended at 1:40 A.M. About two hundred people were there at the beginning; about a hundred remained at the end. The Flux players—Tom Chiu, Cornelius Dufallo, Kenji Bunch, and Darrett Adkins—coped staggeringly well with the physical challenges of this piece. They never left their seats, they never faltered in their execution of the score, and they produced good, true tone all the way through. It was a feat worthy of the "Guinness Book of World Records," and they didn't look particularly tired when it was over.

Yet "Quartet II" proved to be much more than a display of avant-garde machismo. It was a disorienting, transfixing experience that repeatedly approached and touched the sublime. The work is a kind of continent of sound which you can never see whole; instead, you focus on isolated patches, scattered epiphanies. Nietzsche once wrote, sardonically but accurately, that Wagner is the greatest of miniaturists, offering up sensual moments over huge spans of time, and Feldman works in much the same way. Some parts of the quartet seem deliberately excruciating: the ears are subjected to unnerving harmonics, amorphous dissonances, and occasional, painful stabs of fortissimo. Then come passages of celestial prettiness. About an hour in, there is a stretch of richly augmented A major, which sounds like early, romantic Schoenberg; immediately afterward, there is a sequence of drones, broken scales, and open fourths which is pure Bartók. In the last hour or so, as if to reward those listeners who keep the faith, the harmony grows ever more fabulously, impressionistically lush.

At the end, the music becomes remote and harsh again. The cello closes with a high two-note figure that sounds like the distant wail of an ambulance. The Flux Quartet added, to chilling effect, a long ritardando. The audience sat for a minute in deathly silence before releasing itself from captivity with riotous applause. It would be crazy, of course, if all music worked this way; the pragmatic magic of a William Bolcom is a necessary counterweight. But Feldman hit his mark. His works belong among the grandest, strangest monuments that a millennium of music has produced. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

WHITE NIGHTS

Scorsese, Reiner, and Lynch take us all the way from rage to old age.

BY ANTHONY LANE

IN his exhausting new picture, “Bringing Out the Dead,” Martin Scorsese returns to the scene of “Mean Streets” and “Taxi Driver,” and you could swear that he’d never been away. New York is still the city that not only never sleeps but has forgotten the correct procedure for taking a nap. Harvey Keitel, in the opening shot of “Mean Streets,” paced wide-eyed around his darkened room, and the soundtrack kicked in at the moment he lay back down, as if his head were a needle dropping into the groove. Then there was Travis Bickle, the Robert De Niro figure in “Taxi Driver,” who took the job through force of insomnia—“I might as well get paid to do it,” he said. Now we have Scorsese’s new hero, a paramedic named Frank Pierce (Nicolas Cage). Frank has a face the color of newspaper and the kind of bags under his eyes that you find in film critics and vampires; there are thousands of necks out there, and you can’t decide whether Frank should sup on them or save them.

The night shift: Nicolas Cage as a paramedic in “Bringing Out the Dead.”

He works nights, naturally; on the rare occasions when sunlight tries to shine in this film, you find yourself blinking like a mole. One day zips past in time-lapse, as if Scorsese, who continues to treat the world like someone lining up outside a movie theatre, couldn’t wait to take refuge in the dark. The film is split into three segments—Thursday, Friday, Saturday. Frank has a different partner for each night: Larry (John Goodman), Marcus (Ving Rhames), and Walls (Tom Sizemore). Larry is sweaty and sated, Marcus is a preacher man, and Walls is nuts. Something has to strap these segments together, and so Scorsese devises some fancy leitmotivs. We have Noel (Marc Anthony), a rope-haired junkie with a thirst for water and death; we have Rose (Cynthia Roman), the spectre of an asthmatic girl who perished in Frank’s arms; and we have Mary Burke (Patricia Arquette). In the opening scene, Frank gets a pulse going in Mary’s father, who has suffered cardiac arrest; Mr. Burke spends the rest of the movie in the hospital, and his daughter spends the rest of the movie being a total pain in the ass. She hangs around Frank, and they form a feeble partnership, although why he should have anything to do with her I can’t work out. Maybe it’s because Arquette is so blank and wasted that, next to her, even Nicolas Cage starts to look like Howard Keel.

“Bringing Out the Dead” is a downer of a movie that strains every sinew to

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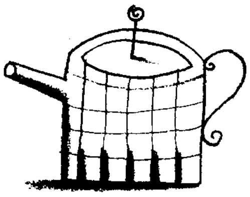
be up. It was adapted from the novel by Joe Connelly, who was himself a paramedic for nine years; the screenplay is by Paul Schrader, who has lifted much of Connelly word for word but has also glazed the action with his own brand of gloom. Schrader was Scorsese's sidekick from "Taxi Driver" days, and it was always a volatile combination—the cool agonies of the Calvinist reacting with the operatic delirium of the Italian Catholic. The new picture comes supplied with the same tension, but, though I hate to say so, it feels like a package; you quickly batten on to everything the movie has to show, and after that it springs shockingly few surprises. This is not to ascribe any cynicism to Scorsese, who maintains the bridling lust for action that you would find in a young film student with a rented camera; it's just that the dance and dazzle of his style grows ever more hectic in the effort to gee up the numbness at the heart of the story—to jolt it back to life, like Frank and Larry with their trusty defibrillator. When the camera brings the ambulance blaring toward us, then somersaults as it rushes past, without a cut, so that we wind up watching the vehicle head away upside down, we can't help being amazed; thinking back on that shot, however, I wanted to ask what it was for. I guess Scorsese was pushing the emotional vertigo up another rung, like one of those shamelessly beautiful Puccini arias that refuse to call a halt; but is it really worth lavishing such radiant care on a few haggard moaners in white scrubs?

The eruptive finale of "Taxi Driver" was at once morally outraging and dramatically the only possible option: something had to burst, and it had to be Bickle. In the case of "Bringing Out the Dead," nothing so grievous is at stake; if there is spiritual crisis here, it seems to have raged and faded before the movie even begins. By way of compensation, Schrader keeps nudging our elbow with religious hints: the purgative three-day descent into Hell; the young woman who gives birth to twins, is said by her boyfriend to be a virgin, and whose name just happens to be Maria; and, above all, the loop-tape lamentation of Frank's voice-over—"It was enough that I showed up. I was a grief mop." What this picture badly needs is a fun hose, and it doesn't get one until Ving Rhames arrives. He has the fire and the gall to realize that so brutal a tale can flourish only as black comedy; his jiving riffs with the ambulance dispatchers—one of whom is played by Scorsese—carry the sort of clout that you associate with "Raging Bull" and "Goodfellas," and Rhames alone seems worthy of the insanely good soundtrack of songs that the director has brought to the party.

From the first screech of harmonica—half music, half siren—at the start of the film, you sense a new and curious note of self-persuasion in Scorsese. "This film takes place in New York City," we are told; but it doesn't. It takes place in the New York of Scorsese's chivvying, neon-hot imagination; just as Woody Allen keeps unveiling a city more blithe and harmonious than any we recognize, so Scorsese has dug in his heels and clung to the scabby, arousing plague-pit of "Taxi Driver." That work was rooted in the known; this one blooms out of a perverse nostalgia, out of a refusal to admit that most people now walk the avenues in undramatic fear. When we talk of an artist's vision, we should recall how many visions are warped by myopia or astigmatism; it is both Scorsese's absolute privilege and his dangerous frailty that he is obliged, by temperament and by the momentum of his formidable technique, to conceive of New York as a silver skin laced with golden blood. "Someday a real rain will come down and wash all this scum off the streets," said Travis Bickle to himself, a quarter of a century ago. Not even as distinguished a fantasist as Martin Scorsese could have foreseen that the role of the rain would be played by Rudy Giuliani.

THE first words you hear in "The Story of Us" are "I'm sorry," sung by Eric Clapton on the soundtrack. Clapton is his usual bundle of happiness, and he sets the tone for what ensues; "The Story of Us," the tale of a failing marriage, has a lot to be sorry about. The failing comes on fast; halfway through the opening scene, Ben Jordan (Bruce Willis) and his wife, Katie (Michelle Pfeiffer), having given the kids permission to leave the dinner table, settle back and practice their glower at each other. This continues for the rest of the movie, interrupted by occasional flash points of lung-busting rage and, less excitingly, by occasional flashbacks to happier days. You can tell which days are happy because Michelle Pfeiffer's hair goes all frizzy and Bruce Willis's hair, while remaining absent on top, goes all long and greasy at the back. He looks like a lazy monk.

I wonder whether we'll see this species of movie for much longer—the big, unwieldy feelings-grinder, manned by megastars and making terribly heavy weather of small, unexceptional predicaments. It has been around for decades, and the rust is biting deep; even the spirited Willis and Pfeiffer seem defeated by the need to chew their lower lips and frown at regular intervals. The fact that many viewers will see their own history—fall in love, marry, buy enormous family four-by-four, fall out of love—mirrored in that of the Jordans is no guarantee that they will warm to this movie, and they may even feel insulted by the lumpishness of the storytelling. I suspect, for instance, that the sequence in which a wrecking ball piles into the side of an apartment building where the Jordans used to live is meant to carry a symbolic swing. Ben describes the place as "where we became an us," yet another contribution to the film's peculiar attitude toward pronouns. "You look like you," he tells Katie when she opens the door, a compliment that she repays in the climactic scene: "We're an us!" she cries. Me is flummoxed.



"The Story of Us" is directed by Rob Reiner, and it represents a strange addendum to the Reiner canon. To his credit, he has always proved a hard man to pin down, swaying from "When Harry Met Sally" to "The Princess Bride" and the firm-chinned strivings of "A Few Good Men." Here he plays the part of Ben's best friend, and you can taste a sour knowingness in his marital counsels—"Hate fades" is the best he can offer. The movie rolls all the Reiner tones into one, and there are times when he throws up his hands and simply crams the screen with a montage of fights, laughs, tears, and all the other traditional additives of marriage. By the end, you feel drained and disaffected, as if you, too, had been living with the Jordans for fifteen years. How could the maker of "This Is Spinal Tap" get himself into such a mess?

NO contest, no argument, no second thoughts: "The Straight Story" is the best film ever made about a lawnmower. How the creators of hundred-million-dollar disaster movies came to overlook this simplest yet most merrily destructive of machines is a matter of eternal mystery. Even weirder is the fact that when a top-flight director finally gets around to putting a secondhand John Deere mower ('66 model) at the heart of a picture, that director is David Lynch. My, what a tease that Lynch boy can be.

The film is founded on a real journey; the late Alvin Straight rode his mower two hundred and sixty miles from Laurens, Iowa, to Mt. Zion, Wisconsin, to see his ailing brother, Lyle. Our hero was seventy-three at the time; Richard Farnsworth, who plays him in the movie, and who was playing cowboys onscreen back in the thirties, looks even older, and the tale turns into a gentle rumination on the closing act of a life. There are passages of unabashed rapture here, but, then again, how could there not be? With so little plot in the way—brake failure on a steep gradient gives us twenty minutes of intense John Deere repair-costs drama—Lynch allows himself free visual rein, and if you want to know how to photograph the blur of passing cyclists this is your movie. On the other hand, poor Alvin then has to sit by a campfire and inform the cyclists that "the worst part of being old is remembering when you were young," which suggests that the worst part of uneventful movies is writing the words to fill them with. Still, it's intriguing to watch the Lynch of "Blue Velvet" and "Lost Highway" feel his way toward a less wounding surrealism—into images that have power to hurt and will do none. Coming soon to a theatre near you: "The Care and Watering of Begonias." A Film by Oliver Stone. ♦

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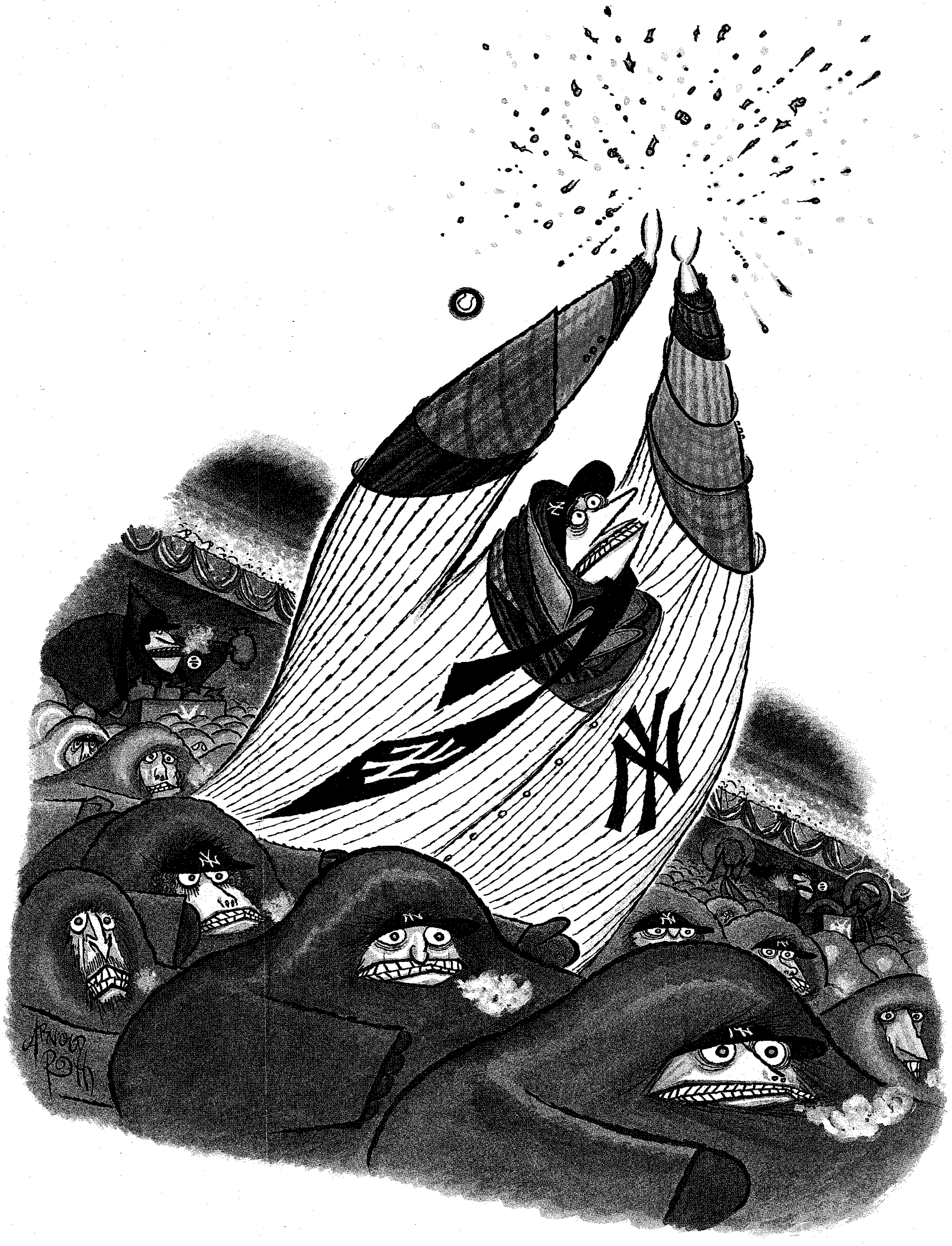
COLD SNAP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